

An Analysis of the Representation of Internet Child Luring and the Fear of Cyberspace in
Four Canadian Newspapers

By

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Abstract

Due to the popularization of Internet technologies in the last two decades, public attention has been directed to issues surrounding *online* sexual exploitation of minors in Canadian Newspapers. Specifically, newspaper articles have assisted in shaping public perceptions of the nature and scope of Internet child luring. A mixed quantitative/qualitative content analysis methodology is applied to the study's four Canadian-based newspapers to examine how Internet child luring is constructed between the 1st of January, 2002 and December 31st, 2010. The study highlights the possible influences Canadian print media might have on the perceptions of parents and legal guardians regarding crime prevention and the dangers associated with Internet use by minors. Canadian print media has been instrumental in constructing the perception of Internet technology and its use by minors as harmful, intrusive, and unavoidable while designating parents and legal guardians as primary watchdogs of their children's online behaviours.

Key Words: Internet child luring, media representation, crime prevention, minors, online sexual exploitation

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Introduction

Child sexual abuse is a key issue on many social and political agendas within Canada (Loughlin and Taylor-Butts 2009). With the popularization of Internet technologies in the last two decades, public attention has been directed to issues surrounding *online* sexual exploitation of minors in Canadian newspapers. Newspaper articles have assisted in shaping public perceptions of the nature and scope of these crimes. This study will focus on one example: Internet-based child luring.

The enactment of luring offences in 2002 (Section 172.1 in the Canadian Criminal Code) makes "...it an offence to communicate via a 'computer system' with a person under a certain age, or a person whom the accused believes to be under a certain age, for the purpose of facilitating the commission of certain sexual offences in relation to children or child abduction" (Goetz and Lafreniere 2001, 4). This offence was created in an effort to curb and regulate the growing concerns regarding child victimization through the Internet. Due to the technology-enabled nature of this crime and the lack of physical proximity required, minors require protection through various sources. Information about Internet child luring and the risks and dangers associated with Internet technology have been communicated to the public through mass media, including via traditional news coverage.

Through media representations of Internet luring in news coverage, news frames are structured in specific ways that encourage public consensus concerning such issues (Chong and Druckman 2007; Druckman 2001a; Entman 1993). Framing theory will be applied as one of the theoretical components in this media analysis to explore how Internet luring has been constructed. Historically, mass media has influenced how society develops and maintains certain ideologies regarding issues framed in the media

(Jewkes 2004). As child sexual abuse is recognized as a heinous crime in social and political realms, Canadian newspapers have paid considerable attention to this new variant of the phenomenon.

This study underlines the significant influence that journalism may have upon readers in Canada, with regard to their understanding of Internet technology and its use by minors. Today's children and youth have been brought up in a technological era where computers are used daily for entertainment, education, and social networking purposes. However, this technology has also proven to pose threats to personal security. It is presumed by Canadian newspapers that parents and legal guardians as well as adolescent users of the Internet need to be reminded to exercise prudence while using the World Wide Web (WWW) and other online applications.

Crime prevention theory focuses on means to minimize crime (Felson 1995; Eck 2003). A neo-liberal framework contends that crime prevention "...should be understood as part of a 'responsibilisation' strategy aimed at ensuring that individuals and communities accept more of the burden of dealing with safety and security issues in that society" (Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008, 16). Since community involvement is necessary in the communal aim to reduce the incidence of luring, crime prevention theory suggests that parents and legal guardians are essential to situational prevention to help establish primary barriers of protection for particular children. In this theory, strong social bonds between parent and child are imperative in establishing a connection which allows for parental supervision and open communication about a youth's online activities.

While the millennium generation of youth is generally considered to be computer savvy, parents and legal guardians are commonly portrayed as having been "left in the

dark” in regards to the evolution of the Internet and many possibilities for users (Livingstone and Bober 2005). Although some parents regard themselves as capable in using social networking sites and instant messaging, others consider themselves computer illiterate because of the continuous evolution of websites and other software applications catering to adolescents (Livingston and Bober 2005).

This research project commences with a literature review highlighting important research on Internet technology and the various risks associated with this technology. A section on Internet luring and grooming of minors provides a survey of the existing literature on this crime. Reviews of the current Canadian luring legislation and literature addressing offender/victim characteristics have also been included in this section. The final section of the literature review discusses media representations of online child sexual abuse and the two theoretical components applied in this study (framing theory and crime prevention theory). The subsequent chapters cover methodology, the study’s analysis, and a conclusion that reviews the study’s findings as well as research limitations and policy implications.

The study has two main objectives. They are: (1) to analyze various ways in which four Canadian newspapers framed Internet child luring and Internet technology; and (2) to explore the possible repercussions of these messages on parental confidence in providing guidance to their children. While it is assumed that certain aspects (geographic location, victim/offender characteristics) are likely to be accurate (or at least to accord with available research on these topics), other representations (risks/general fears and allocation of responsibility for prevention measures) are likely to cultivate panic in

parents and legal guardians due to the possible exaggerated representation of the risks associated with using such technologies.

An intention of Canadian newspaper publications reporting on Internet luring might be that the information provided could be useful to further protect minors against exploitation by luring offenders. If this assumption holds true and the purpose is aimed at reducing Internet luring, then crime prevention strategies would presumably be offered to readers. The study aims to evaluate whether and how this presumption holds upon analysis. Further, the study considers who is portrayed as primarily responsible for the protection of minors online. Careful consideration has been taken to document how newspapers within Canada portray Internet use by minors; how Canadian newspapers construct Internet technology more generally; and what methods were provided for crime prevention for parents and legal guardians.

Canadian media's representation of Internet child luring contributes to stirring social anxiety for parents and legal guardians of minors who have access to Internet technology. However, preventative crime theory would support the assertion that parents and legal guardians are essential in situational prevention at the parental level to help establish primary barriers of protection for particular children (via monitoring and educating their children, for instance).

Ultimately, this investigation examines the complications that stem from Canadian print media's efforts to protect minors online by appointing parents and legal guardians as having a primary role in crime prevention, but who in turn experience trepidation about this role due to newspapers' representation of the phenomenon of online sexual exploitation of minors as especially pervasive and difficult to prevent.

Literature Review

Research on the development of Internet technology and online behaviours has become paramount in the development of new legislation internationally, with the intentions of protecting children and adolescents from Internet-based sex crimes. The evolving research in these areas is also pertinent to governmental agencies, health care providers, teachers, and parents and legal guardians. The literature review section highlights contemporary research on Internet user behaviours, Internet luring and grooming of minors, and the theoretical understanding of media's role in society and crime prevention. Specifically, the Internet sections will examine literature on access to online victims, anonymity in cyberspace, and other perceived risks of Internet use. The second section on Internet child luring will look at literature on online grooming of children and youth, victim and offender characteristics, and luring law in Canada (Section 172.1). The last sections will review scholarship on framing theory, media framing of online child sexual abuse, and crime prevention theory.

2.1 Internet as a Medium

The development of the Internet has enabled access to a wealth of information and communication across both distance and time. In Canada, many households have at least one personal computer and the great majority of these households are also connected to the Internet. In a 2005 study, it was reported that 94% of youth in Canada access the Internet from their homes (Young Canadians in a Wired World 2005). The Internet provides a social context for individuals to meet with others and to exchange information on a scale which was never thought possible in the past (Quayle, Vaughan, and Taylor 2006). Particularly among the younger generations, the Internet provides opportunity for seeking out friendships and curious exploration (Maczewski 2002;

Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2003a; 2006).

Instant messaging (such as MSN Instant Messenger, AOL, and Yahoo Chat) has become an important form of communication used by minors. In addition to text messages, most instant messaging programs are capable of sending voice messages and images. As broadband access to the Internet has become common, these networks offer an easy method of establishing and maintaining geographically extended relationships (McKenna et al. 2002). In 2005, 61% of youth reported that they had high-speed (broadband) access to the Internet at home (Young Canadians in a Wired World 2002). The Internet provides opportunity in the development of online relationships; some participants consider these online connections as truly fulfilling and the friends to be closer and more accepting of their true selves than relationships formed offline (McKenna et al. 2002).

Although the Internet is a valuable resource, it can also be detrimental to the well-being of minors due to the various online risks. There is the potential for minors to be victimized via cyberspace through online sexual solicitation and access to pornography (Dombrowski, Gischlar, and Durst 2007; Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008; Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2003a; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004). It is those who are involved in the care of minors who need help and guidance on educating this vulnerable group on how to remain safe while using Internet technology (Atkinson and Newton 2010).

2.1.1 Access to Victims

Children and adolescents, in particular, are suggested as being the significant group embracing new forms of communication technology (Atkinson and Newton 2010;

Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2006). The development of social networking sites and instant messaging services has transformed Internet technology and its user capabilities, which have been embraced by today's generation of youth. The most popular social networking services include Bebo, Facebook, and MySpace, with Twitter as a more recent arrival on the scene (Atkinson and Newton 2010; Pew Internet and American Life Project 2005).

In one study, Patricia Greenfield (2004) explores websites that are directed towards minors and found that while young people are targets of adult creations on the Internet, they are active participants, engaging in chat rooms, instant messaging and website creation. Instant messaging (e.g. MSN Instant Messenger) represents one of the more prevalent Internet communication technologies with an estimated 52 million people using synchronous chat as of 2002 (Pew Internet and American Life Project 2005). Because minors are utilizing the Internet actively where potential perpetrators are attempting to locate victims (Dombrowski, Gischlar, and Durst 2007), minors can potentially be exposed to developmentally inappropriate sexual materials due to grooming practices (Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008; Suzuki and Calzo 2004; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004). Adults attempting to groom a minor will sometimes send pornographic material with intentions of desensitizing them about sexual relations with an adult, or demonstrate that other children are engaging in this behaviour.

As the Internet has become a staple in modern society, access has now become independent of social and economic class in most countries. For a sexual offender, this not only provides access to a large number of minors, but also to a large variety of children who are vulnerable to exploitation (Davidson and Martellozzo 2005). The

Internet as a medium has had a profound effect upon the manner in which child sexual abuse is perpetrated, by creating new and easier ways for perpetrators to anonymously gain access to victims (Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak 2000; Davidson 2008; Davidson and Martellozzo 2005; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004).

2.1.2 Anonymity

The idea of anonymity has been of interest to social scientists. Anonymity has traditionally been regarded as the inability of others to identify an individual or for others to identify oneself (Christopherson 2007; Malesky 2007). The anonymous environment the Internet provides can increase access to some vulnerable children, as an online perpetrator can masquerade as a young person with similar age, interests, and background in order to gain a child's trust (Dombrowski, Gischlar, and Durst 2007; Malesky 2007). The element of anonymity allows perpetrators to gain trust first, and reveal more accurate information later. In a culture that emphasizes physical attraction as an important attribute, the Internet provides an alternative way of developing attraction. It is an environment where what you write, not how you look or sound, is how you are perceived (Christopherson 2007). In recent years, the visual component to communication has become increasingly central to online communication. Whether or not an Internet user chooses to post or send an authentic or fictitious image to represent himself, instant messaging and online social networking sites promote the use of profile pictures to promote one's self to others.

Stephen Hayne and Ronald Rice (1997) suggest that there are two broad categories of anonymity: technical anonymity and social anonymity. These researchers refer to technical anonymity as the removal of all meaningful identifying information

about others in the communicative exchange. This can include the removal of one's name or other identifying information from online communication. Social anonymity refers to the perception of others and/or one's self as unidentifiable due to the lack of cues that would attribute an identity to that individual. Kimberly Christopherson (2007) asserts that it may not necessarily be that one is truly anonymous in a social context, but it is the individual who perceives him or herself to be anonymous to others in the online communication.

Darhl Pedersen's (1997) research on privacy asserts that anonymity is associated with catharsis and autonomy. Catharsis is defined as the unconstrained expression of thoughts and feelings to others (Pedersen 1997). It is traditionally thought that in communication that is open, catharsis meant that one was actively confiding in another person (Christopherson 2007; Pedersen 1997). On the Internet, one can remain completely anonymous within this environment while still expressing thoughts and emotions without fear of being identified and socially evaluated. However, there are positive and negative elements to anonymous communication. Pedersen (1997) asserts that anonymity also includes an important element of autonomy. Autonomy involves the opportunity to experiment with new behaviours and ideas without fear of social consequences. Perpetrators can use anonymity to develop a different persona without fear that their true identity will be revealed. It is this factor that can lead to a sense of freedom for individuals, allowing the opportunity to engage in behaviours typically disapproved of by others (Christopherson 2007; Malesky 2007).

Mechthild Maczewski's (2002) study interviewed nine young individuals between the ages of 13 and 19 via an online chat room designed by the researcher. Participant

responses suggested that online communication was an important element of these participants' social circles and their own personal development. One participant discussed how the anonymity of the Internet allowed him to pick and choose who he wanted to talk to without negative social consequences. The limited stimuli and perceived anonymity may actually enhance the perception of intimacy (McKenna et al. 2002). Although the Internet assures anonymity for its users, it also provides new opportunity for sexual abuse (Davidson and Martellozzo 2005; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004; 2006; Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008).

2.1.3 Other Perceived Risks of the Internet Use

Online relationships sometimes shift to offline, with participants meeting face-to-face. Pedophiles have been acknowledged as using synchronous chat to develop relationships with minors who they groom for exploitation (Berson 2003; Chase and Statham 2005; Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak 2000; Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak 2007; Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2006). Given its burgeoning growth and its accessibility, the Internet is altering patterns of sexual behaviour, sexual health, education, and social communication (Cooper, McLoughlin, and Campbell 2000). Interpersonal relationships have now taken on a new dynamic as the Internet is enhancing and complicating these online connections.

While technology has a place in preventing access to pornographic material and other sites that can be harmful to the viewing minor, the tools available today have proven inadequate in safeguarding minors from all forms of harmful content, as well as from forming harmful relationships while online. Technological strategies for protecting

children and adolescents, though recommended, are insufficient as a singular means of safeguarding young people from online harms (Dombrowski, Gischlar, and Durst 2007).

The development of the Internet has allowed minors to explore new opportunities as well as providing the autonomy to create their own personal websites in which they can display personal images, personal information and current interests. The identification of the risk of harm in cyberspace environments presents some challenges (Atkinson and Newton 2010). While some scholarship has examined the effects on minors of exposure to harmful content such as adult pornography, recent concerns include the range of content produced and distributed by adolescents themselves. Chris Atkinson and David Newton (2010) assert that images are being posted of school fights, minors posing with knives and/or guns, sexual images or videos of themselves or others, and self-harming behaviours (including eating disorder material). When examining harmful effects of exposure to Internet content, harmful exposure is not limited to sexual content. Hargreave and Livingstone (2006) contend that all online content that has been created by online users should be reviewed to determine if such content poses harmful effects.

2.2 Internet Child Luring

The Internet presents challenges to those responsible for the developmental wellbeing of children and adolescents due to numerous online hazards. Although there are various ways in which minors can be victimized online, one of the more pernicious threats involves Internet luring and grooming of minors by adults for sexual purposes (Atkinson and Newton 2010; Dombrowski, Gischlar, and Durst 2007; Durkin 1997;

Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak 2007; 2008; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004).

Internet luring of minors remains an important topic in social policies and legislation.

2.2.1. Online Grooming of Children and Youth for Sexual Abuse

Online “grooming” involves a process of socialization through which an offender searches online for a vulnerable child (for instance, a child who is lonely or depressed, or seeking adult attention), and gains the child’s trust by possibly sharing hobbies and interests, progressing to confidences about problems with family or friends, and then introducing sexual conversation in order to eventually prepare him or her for sexual abuse (Davidson and Gottschalk 2011). After the preliminary contact, the offender will develop rapport with the victim, which may culminate in an offline meeting. Potential victims are sometimes targeted by anonymous perpetrators because of their vulnerability and insecurities, and because they are unsupervised online (Davidson and Martellozzo 2005). Ethel Quayle, Mary Vaughan, and Max Taylor (2006) state that Internet grooming can be and is often different from “real-world” grooming as potential offenders spend less time chatting and generally jump straight to the point in their intention for sexual gratification. However, this is not always the case as there are some offenders who will spend a considerable amount of time grooming a minor (Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak 2000; Davidson 2008). Rather than face-to-face contact where immediate sexual interaction is socially unacceptable between child and adult, inhibitions could be lessened by the Internet and lengthier intimate contact can occur.

The purpose of the communication by the offender with the minor might be to play out sexually deviant fantasies. However, other offenders might be desensitizing the minor to child-adult sexual activity (e.g. sending pornography) in hopes of meeting

offline (Dombrowski, Gischlar, and Durst 2007). The National Juvenile Online Victimization Study (N-JOV) conducted in the United States by the Crimes against Children Research Center (CCRC) found that most Internet-initiated sex crimes involved adolescents who were too young to consent to sexual intercourse (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004). In some cases the respondents believed themselves to be in love or very close to the offenders they had met online (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004). These crimes were non-forcible and committed by men who were much older than the victim, though the victims were aware they were communicating with an adult who was open about wanting sex (Wolak et al. 2006; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004). The victims in these cases were young adolescents with 99% being 13 to 17-year-olds and none being younger than 12-years-old (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004; Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008).

The First Youth Internet Safety Survey (YISS-1) was conducted in 2000 by the CCRC to estimate the prevalence of youth in the United States receiving unwanted sexual solicitations, harassment, and exposure to pornography on the Internet. The 2000 study found that 19% of youth surveyed had received an online request to partake in sexual activities or sexual talk or to give personal sexual information to an adult (Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak 2000). However, a 2005 study showed that only 5 % of youth Internet users had talked online to unknown people about sex, and about three-quarters of the youth surveyed did not give out personal information (Wolak et al. 2008). Therefore the 2005 study demonstrates that only a small percentage of youth were actually partaking in such communication with adults.

The Second Youth Internet Safety Survey (YISS-2) was conducted in 2005 by the CCRC to reassess and quantify the extent to which youth Internet users were encountering problems with harassment, unwanted sexual solicitation, and unwanted exposure to sexual material on the Internet. This study found that 13% of youth Internet users received sexual solicitations compared to the 19% of users in YISS-1 (Mitchell, Wolak, Finkelhor 2008; Wells and Mitchell 2008; Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2006). Moreover, the findings also suggested that high-risk youth, defined as youth who have been victimized offline or who have high levels of parental conflict, may possess distinctive patterns of Internet use, therefore having an increased likelihood of being sexually solicited on the Internet (Wells and Mitchell 2008).

Sylvia Kierkegaard (2008) argues that the availability of sensitive personal information posted by minors, anonymity of the Internet, and the ease of contacting people make social networking sites an especially useful tool for online child predators. Aside from chat rooms and social networking sites, grooming can also be facilitated through mobile phones, e-mail, and sometimes blogs (Kierkegaard 2008). However, bloggers were found to be less inclined to communicate with unknown persons who posted on their blogs (Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008).

2.2.2 Offender Characteristics

Research has shown that sex offenders who use the Internet to meet minors are generally men. The N-JOV US national study found that 99% of the offenders were male with 76% being 26-years-old or older and 47% were more than 20 years older than their victims (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004). The YISS-2 study in 2005 found that youth described almost three-quarters (73%) of solicitors as being male and 39% as being

18-years of age and older (Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008). These solicitations were typically from Internet users they did not know previous to their contact online. Research has also found that most sex offenders generally do not deceive victims about their age or sexual intentions when communicating with a minor (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004; Wolak et al. 2008).

Janis Wolak, David Finkelhor, and Kimberly Mitchell's (2004) research about Internet sex crimes indicates that the stereotypes about sex offenders are skewed as most cases involving children do not use trickery and violence to assault children. The majority of sexual relations between victim and offender are generally non-forcible (Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2002; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004; Wolak et al. 2008). These meetings are generally non-forcible as the victims usually agree to meet offline after successfully being groomed by the offender. Sexual offenders are also viewed as a heterogeneous group, and as a result it is difficult to define a typology of these offenders due to the complex nature of Internet child luring (Malesky 2007; Wolak et al. 2008)

In a recent study on sex offenders, Alvin Malesky (2007) conducted interviews with 31 child sex offenders to research the various ways victims were located on the Internet. In his study, he found that chat rooms were the most frequently used to identify and contact potential victims. Twenty-five individuals (81%) stated that they had visited chat rooms geared toward minors with the intentions of meeting children/adolescents. Of these 25 individuals, 14 offenders attempted to arrange an offline meeting for sex. Social networking sites and postings to bulletin boards were also identified as potential locations where victims would be sought out. Fifteen participants (48.4%) reported reviewing

online social networking sites for profiles linked to minors. All of these online outlets used by offenders are consistent with other international research on Internet child offenders and their victims (Atkinson and Newton 2010; Dombrowski, Gischlar, and Durst 2007; Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak 2000; Livingston and Bober 2005; Maczewski 2002; Malesky 2007; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004; Wolak et al. 2008).

Keith Durkin's (1997) research suggests that sex offenders misuse the Internet in four distinct ways: to traffic child pornography, to locate children to abuse, to engage in inappropriate sexual communication with minors, and to communicate with other sex offenders. It is important to acknowledge that these categories can be simultaneously used by a single sex offender. However, some sex offenders only use the Internet to fulfill sexual fantasies through online dialogue and not to arrange offline meetings with minors. There are also several factors that allow people to engage in highly deviant sexual behaviour. Accessibility, affordability, and anonymity are three important features of the Internet that allow offenders to engage in various deviant online behaviours (Cooper, McLoughlin, and Campbell 2000).

2.2.3 Victim Characteristics

Children and adolescents have been the focus of numerous research projects studying online behaviour. As Internet technology remains an important part of people's everyday life, the Internet is now viewed as a much more acceptable forum for minors seeking out friendships and romantic relationships (Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2003a). However, the use of the Internet by minors can be highly creative and

changeable, and so predicting online behaviours can pose challenges (Atkinson and Newton 2010).

In Julia Davidson and Elena Martellozzo's (2005) study of London, UK children aged 10 to 13, the findings indicate that children do have some basic knowledge about "stranger danger"; however, these children are not appropriately applying this knowledge to cyberspace. The participants in this study did have adequate knowledge not to provide personal information to "online" strangers and arrange offline meetings. However, the children made an important distinction between "strangers" and "virtual friends". Most of the participants believed they had the ability to distinguish between adults "pretending" to be youth and "actual" youth they were chatting with by way of online interpersonal communication. In another UK study of youth between the ages of 12 and 17, it was those who were between the ages of 15 and 17 who were most willing to take risks by divulging personal information and having contact with unknown people (Livingston and Bober 2005). However, it is important to note that it is not necessarily the posting of information that puts minors at direct risk as millions of minors post on various sites without incident. It is the willingness to interact with an adult online and, specifically, the willingness to engage in sexual conversation that creates the risky environment that could enable the victimization to occur (Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008).

In a US national sample examining close online relationships, Janis Wolak, Kimberly Mitchell, and David Finkelhor (2002) found in the YISS-1 that 25% of Internet users ages 10 to 17 had formed casual online friendships in the year before they had been interviewed, and 14% had formed close online friendships or online romances. The N-

JOV study (Wolak et al. 2004) revealed some important findings regarding sexual offences against minors that originated in chat room contact with adults. The study found that 75% of the juveniles who had experienced sexual victimization were girls between 13 and 15 years old. Three-quarters of the adult offenders were older than 25 years old, and more than half of the offenders who met a minor lived within 50 miles of each other. The majority of victims also described themselves as being in love with or having a close bond with the offender when asked about their experiences.

Wolak et al., (2004) also identified aspects of youth vulnerability, which augments the likelihood of victimization. High levels of conflict with parents, low parental supervision, depression, and homosexuality in boys were all found to be substantially important when evaluating online behaviours. Alienation from parents was also a pertinent factor to tendencies to develop close relationships online for both genders (Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2003a). These youth were considered high-risk and engaged in thrill-seeking behaviours while online. In both the YISS-1(2000) and YISS-2 (2005) surveys, it was found that high-risk youth were significantly different from other youth (Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak 2000; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004; Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2003a; 2006). In the YISS-2 survey, almost half of the high-risk youth chatted with people they had met online, compared to only 31% of other youth not considered in this risk category (Wells and Mitchell 2008; Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2006).

While adults generally perceive risk-taking as hazardous, minors could view this behaviour as having positive outcomes. Receiving recognition in peer groups and online forums enables adolescents to push against adult boundaries and allows for the social and

sexual development of their identity (Bailey and 2006). This finding also compliments Maczewski's (2002) study of nine young individuals who perceived online communication as important to their personal development and establishment of social circles.

Although high-risk youth were deemed more willing to engage in online communication with strangers, generally most youth in the N-JOV (2005) survey who received solicitation and harassment online simply ignored these gestures (Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2006). Many preventative strategies are being created without fully understanding the complexities about youth social life and their online behaviours (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004). More research is required to ensure crime prevention encompasses the evolving youth culture in Western society. Not all communication and friendship development is negative and harmful. There is a percentage of minors who are sexually victimized by adult offenders, but most adolescents who use the Internet to communicate with others do in fact form online friendships that develop into genuine relationships (online and off) and the majority of these friendships are with other youth who are likewise seeking to be socially accepted (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004).

2.2.4 C.C.C. Section 172.1

As the Internet evolves and online sexual exploitation of children continues, countries are developing and continuously modifying legislation within their national borders to assist in controlling Internet child luring. However, as each country creates its own legislation, some disparity in legislation occurs when dealing with international cases (Kierkegaard 2008). In Canada, Section 172.1 of the Criminal Code of Canada sets

out the Internet luring offence. On March 14th 2001, Bill C-15, an act to amend the Criminal Code, was introduced to the Federal House of Commons due to the growing concern over Internet-related sexual abuse of minors. The offence came into force on June 4th, 2002 (Goetz and Lafreniere 2001).

Section 172.1 makes it " an offence to communicate via a 'computer system' with a person under a certain age, or a person whom the accused believes to be under a certain age, for the purpose of facilitating the commission of certain sexual offences in relation to children or child abduction" (Goetz and Lafreniere 2001, 4). When the offence was originally enacted, Section 172.1 stated that:

172.1 (1) Every person commits an offence who, by means of a computer system within the meaning of subsection 342.1(2), communicates with

(a) a person who is, or who the accused believes is, under the age of eighteen years, for the purposes of facilitating the commission of an offence under subsection 153(1) [sexual exploitation], subsection 155 [incest] or 163.1 [corrupting morals], subsection 212 [procuring sexual intercourse] (1) or (4) or section 271 [sexual assault], 272 or 273 with respect to that person;

(b) a person who is, or who the accused believes is, under the age of sixteen years, for the purposes of facilitating the commission of an offence under section 280 [abduction of a person under the age of 14] with respect to that person; or

(c) a person who is, or who the accused believes is, under the age fourteen years, for the purpose of facilitating the commission of an offence under section 151 [sexual interference] or 152 [invitation to sexual touching], subsection 160(3) [bestiality] or 173(2) [indecent acts] or section 281 with respect to that person.

(2) Every person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is guilty of

(a) an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term of no more than five years; or

(b) an offence punishable on summary conviction.

(Greenspan and Rosenberg 2004, CC-309)

As of February 28th 2008, the legal age of consent was increased from 14- to 16-years-of age due to the passing of Bill C-2 (Tackling Violent Crimes Act). The new age of consent came into force on May 1st 2008. This new modification makes it illegal for adults more than 5 years older to have sexual relations with 14- and 15-year-olds, unless they are married to the youth. Section 172.1 was consequently modified, and currently states:

172.1 (1) Every person commits an offence who, by means of a computer system within the meaning of subsection 342.1(2), communicates with

(a) a person who is, or who the accused believes is, under the age of eighteen years, for the purpose of facilitating the commission of an offence under subsection 153(1), section 155 or 163.1, subsection 212(1) or (4) or section 271, 272 or 273 with respect to that person;

(b) a person who is, or who the accused believes is, under the age of 16 years, for the purpose of facilitating the commission of an offence under section 151 or 152, subsection 160(3) or 173(2) or section 280 with respect to that person; or

(c) a person who is, or who the accused believes is, under the age of 14 years, for the purpose of facilitating the commission of an offence under section 281 with respect to that person.

(2) Every person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is guilty of

(a) an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than ten years; or

(b) an offence punishable on summary conviction and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding eighteen months”.

(R.S.C. 1985, c.C-46)

The Canadian luring offence consists of three important elements that are required to commit this offence. The first element is that the accused must have used a computer system to communicate with the minor. Thus far, this element has never been denied or discussed in any legal discussions. The second element states that the accused intentionally communicated with a person who is or who he or she believes to be under

the age of consent (as determined by the various secondary sexual offences). The third element states that the accused must have “facilitated” a secondary sexual offence through conversation with a minor. In the case of *R. v. Legare*, the Supreme Court of Canada evaluated the Canadian luring law and held that “facilitating” is broader than an attempt: it is “helping to bring about and making easier or more probable – for example, by ‘luring’ or ‘grooming’ young persons to commit or to participate in the prohibited conduct; by reducing their inhibitions; or by prurient discourse that exploits a young person’s curiosity, immaturity or precocious sexuality” (*R. v. Legare* at para. 28). Before this clarification, some courts held that the intentions of the accused to “facilitate” a secondary sexual offence had to be explicitly known (such as via evidence that he or she tried to arrange an offline meeting with the minor).

2.3 Media Representation

Media representations of crime stories focus on a variety of attributes that can dramatically alter an individual’s perception of that crime. Several research studies highlight the elements in particular events or incidents that are considered newsworthy and attention grabbing (Boulahanis and Heltsley 2004; Katz 1987; Weitzer and Kubrin 2004). Within this coverage, atypical features of crime related stories generally make front-page headlines (Boulahanis and Heltsley 2004). Personality (McCombs 1994), personal experience (Jaehnig, Weaver, and Fico 1981), social location (Gamso et al. 1992), age, race, gender, and national identity variations (Kitzinger 1999) of the parties in a crime story are all integral factors in deciding what is considered newsworthy in mass media. How particular stories are framed depends on which particular issues are deemed to be of social importance in a society.

The majority of news coverage in local newspaper revolves around crime related stories in western society (Cohen 2002; Surette 1992). With this coverage, media plays an integral part in swaying public opinions and beliefs about crime. In regard to some types of crime, a panic can develop that is disproportionate to the actual threat because of this exposure to atypical stories. This very exposure creates an irrational fear among citizens (Boulahanis and Heltsley 2004). It is believed that media outlets predominantly rely upon police sources to construct news stories to portray them as a relatively acute social problem (Welch, Weber, and Edwards 2000). Therefore, Internet child luring stories likely also rely upon police sources in providing facts about specific cases. A “tough on crime” political agenda can be supported by means of this uncritical transfer of information from police reports to news stories (Jewkes 2004; Welch, Weber, and Edwards 2000).

2.3.1. Framing Theory

Denis Chong and James Druckman (2007) purport that news issues can always be constructed and viewed from a variety of perspectives and can always be construed as having implications from multiple viewpoints. Effective framing refers to the process by which an issue is structured in a specific manner that develops a particular conceptualization or re-orient the public’s way of thinking about that particular issue (Chong and Druckman 2007).

Erving Goffman’s (1974) framing analysis maintains that individuals in society all actively classify, organize, and interpret life experiences to make sense of them. The “schemata of interpretation”, which are labelled “frames”, enable individuals “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” (Goffman 1974, 21) occurrences. William Gamson and

Andrea Modigliani (1987) elaborate and assert that a frame is a “central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning” (143) to events related to an issue. At the core of a larger unit of public discourse is a “package,” that also includes various policy positions that may be derived from the frame as well as a set of “symbolic devices” (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 143) that indicate the presence of frames and policy positions.

Symbolic devices interact with individual agents' memory for meaning construction.

In public opinion literature, high-quality opinions are generally defined as being consistent, informed, and stable which is usually connected to abstract principles and values. However, when discussing mass news media, such well-developed opinions are rare (Chong and Druckman 2007; Zaller 1992). Journalists and media outlets often have an agenda that can drastically change public opinion depending on how a news story is rhetorically structured. Public opinion research calls this phenomenon “Framing Effects” (Chong and Druckman 2007; Etman 1993; Jacoby 2002; Jewkes 2004; Scheufele 1999; Valkenburg, Semtko, and De Vreese 1999). Framing effects occur when a basic issue is restructured and the change has a significant impact on the meaning of the issue for readers.

Chong and Druckman (2007) assert that in order for framing effects to occur, a given consideration in the memory of the individual must be stored and made available for retrieval and use. This consideration must not only be available but be accessible as well, “meaning its activation potential must exceed a certain threshold so that the consideration is retrieved from long-term memory” (Chong and Druckman 2007, 110). One way for a consideration to develop and increase accessibility is through regular and recent exposure to a communication frame accentuating that particular consideration.

Further, “considerations become accessible through a passive or unconscious process” (Chong and Druckman 2007, 110).

Gamson and Modigliani (1987) conceptually define a media frame as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events...the frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (143). It is these media frames that sometimes imitate those used by politicians, social activists, other media outlets, or citizens (Jocaby 2000; Scheufelel 1999, 109), and through repeated exposure of these frames, citizens regularly adopt frames they learn in communication with other people in society (Neuman, Just, and Crigler 1992).

The basic idea is to observe news text as a system of organized signifying elements which both identify the encouragement of particular ideas and provide strategies to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of the text (Pan and Kosicki 1993). Framing is best to conceptualize as a process which progresses over time. It is this time that allows for individuals to separate new issues from older debated issues that become familiar to those who pay close attention to media reports on news (Chong and Druckman 2007; Gamson and Modigliani 1987; Pan and Kosicki 1993; Tuchman 1978).

Robert Etman (1993) emphasizes that frames have to be considered schemes for both the presenting of news (media frames) and comprehension of news (individual frames). For him, the essential factors of a media frame are the section and salience of an issue: “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Etman 1993, 52). Individual frames are defined as clusters of ideas and beliefs that are

mentally stored that guide individuals' processing of information (Chong and Druckman 2007; Etman 1993; Scheufele 1999; Tuchman 1978).

Etman (1993) also identified five traits of media text that set a frame of reference that have proven critical in the information processing by consumers of media. They are: (1) importance judgements; (2) agency, or the answer to the question (who did it?); (3) identification with potential victims; (4) categorization, or the choice of labels for the incidents; and, (5) generalizations to a broader national context. These were important traits found in analyses of newspapers, news magazines, and network newscasts.

Strong frames should not be confused with intellectually or morally superior arguments as many news frames are constructed around exaggerations and outright lies playing on the fears and prejudices of the public (Chong and Druckman 2007; Jacoby 2002; Kitzinger 2004; Tuchman 1978; Zaller 1992) Also, there are other moderators that contribute to the strength of media frames. Frames that are delivered by credible sources are more likely to shift public opinion about a pressing issue (Druckman 2001a; 2001b).

2.3.2 Framing of Online Child Sexual Abuse

Media coverage about "online predators" that use the Internet to communicate with young victims have been a staple of news reports since the late 1990s, when the Internet became widespread amongst youth users (Wolak et al. 2008). In these media reports, sex offenders are often stereotypically portrayed as prowling the Internet searching for unsuspecting children and adolescents. It is these conventional news reports that initially developed public fears about Internet use by minors and about the risks of common online behaviours of youth (Wolak et al. 2008), such as communicating with unknown people, posting profiles containing pictures and personal information, and using social networking sites (Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak 2000; Livingston and

Bober 2004; Malesky 2007; Maczewski 2002; Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004; Wolak et al. 2008).

A large portion of media coverage on child sexual abuse and the Internet frame young children as likely victims or focus on deception, violence, and abduction. These minors are often typified as “innocent young children” in print media, while effective measures for preventions are rarely provided. This inaccurate portrayal of victims as preadolescents does not sensitize the public, parents, or adolescents to the actual dynamics of online luring of minors in print media (Davidson 2008; Kitzinger 2004; Wolak et al. 2008).

While online luring victims continue to be framed as vulnerable and lacking sexual autonomy, many reports fail to convey a clear understanding of what the relationship between the adult offender and underage adolescent consisted of, nor the rationale for criminalizing such behaviours (Wolak et al. 2008). Messages that reinforce social norms about these relationships should be published for the public to establish a consensus on how to tackle this phenomenon (Davison 2008; Kitzinger 2004; Wolak et al. 2008). What is lacking in news reporting on luring is clear messages regarding the inequality of power and experience between adults and youth, the immaturity of teens and the potential negative impact on healthy sexual development (Davidson 2008; Kitzinger 2004; Wolak et al. 2008). Crime prevention would be more effective if media outlets restructured their narratives to encompass a solid foundation on how to approach Internet child luring and provide the accurate facts about this crime to help squash erroneous misconceptions.

2.4 Crime Prevention Theory

When attempting to understand the prevention or reduction of crime, it is important that policy makers and practitioners confront two fundamental questions about crime. The first question is: “what are the underlying causes of offending,” and the second question is “which of these causes are most relevant to the crime currently being addressed” (Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008, 12). Criminologists have regarded crime itself as being a social construct which widely varies from society to society. Crime also varies during different historical eras in a single society (Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008).

Adam Sutton, Adrian Cherney, and Rob White (2008) assert that every theory about crime prevention rests upon broader assumptions about social control and society; however, many criminologists differ in their views on the ways it should be approached in practice. Crime prevention to the general public may define crime as a negative behaviour and any attempt to prevent such crimes is therefore applauded. However, an important division remains over the merits and meanings of contemporary approaches to crime prevention (Eck 2003; Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008).

It is neo-liberalism that initiated a resurgence of policies and practices in the 20th century, as the State has recognized that it no longer has the capacity to provide full crime control (Garland 2001; Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008). Private civilians, community groups and agencies are drawn together by a central ideology that “crime prevention involves the whole community” and everyone can become an active partner in the co-production of safety and security (Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008). In keeping with the notion that crime prevention is not solely the responsibility of the State, crime

prevention strategies and programs encourage and instruct citizens and organizations to use situational prevention to reduce their own risk status (Felson 1995; Eck 2003; Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008).

Marcus Felson's (1995) Crime Triangle Model argues that any crime must encompass three direct factors. For a crime to occur, the coming together at a particular time and place of a motivated offender, a potential target, and the absence of a capable guardianship are required for commission of an offence. Targets can include both people and inanimate objects and guardianship can be defined in terms of both human actors and security devices such as parents, security guard, cameras, and alarms. Guardianship can take on formal and informal forms of social control. In the absence of a capable guardian (either formal or informal), the likelihood of a crime occurring increases in a specific context (Felson 1995). An example of an informal guardian would be a pedestrian on a street corner whose mere presence helps to deter crime.

John Eck (2003) modified Felson's model to include an outer layer of the triangle which emphasises factors that can influence both offending behaviours and target vulnerability. The modification includes the addition of "controllers," "handlers," and "managers." The "controllers" are essentially the guardians but also can be referred to as a "handlers" who are people who have a key influence over the potential offender. The "handler/guardian" essentially influences both the protection of the victim/target as well as monitoring potential offender behaviour. Examples of "handlers" are: parents, siblings, peers, employers, or teachers. These individuals are anyone who can regulate, supervise and affect some restraint over the actions of a potential offender (Eck 2003;

Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008). The “managers” are responsible for the control over places and sites where crime can happen.

Discouragement of crime can be achieved by the simple presence of citizens. Felson (1995) contends that there are varying degrees of responsibility for discouraging crime. Personal discouragement is exerted by family and friends; assigned discouragement is exercised by individuals who are employed for security purposes; diffused discouragement is exercised by those who are employed to support potential offenders but are not assigned to specific tasks of security; and general discouragement is exercised by individuals who are unpaid and lacking a personal tie or occupational responsibility – for instance, people present in public places (Felson 1995).

2.4.1 Situational Crime Prevention

The situational crime prevention framework is built around a problem-solving approach, which is seen as an important element in crime prevention planning (Clarke 1983; Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008). The initial point for which situational prevention stands is to view the world from the point of view from a potential offender. Specifically, situational crime prevention tries to understand how individuals perceive opportunities for crime as well as the removal of these opportunities (Clarke 1983). At the very least, it is important to make these opportunities less readily available and appealing (Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008).

Situational theorists (Clarke 1983; Eck 2003; Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008) argue that crime cannot be adequately understood on dispositional or social structural conditions. A theoretical example of a dispositional theory that contrasts situational theory is low self-control theory. This theory holds that individuals develop levels of

self-control by about ages seven or eight, and these levels remain relatively stable the rest of their lives. Individuals with low levels of self-control end up being more prone to crime, and their criminal propensity continues into later life (Gottfredson and Hirshi 1990). Dispositional theories assert that individuals are born with, or come to acquire, a “disposition” to behave in a consistently criminal manner. Social structural theories contend that certain groups or subcultures in society have values and attitudes that are conducive to crime and violence. Both of these theories rests upon assumption that conditions that cause crime exist are contributed to background factors or variables.

With situational crime prevention, opportunity should be recognized as a necessary condition. As situational prevention rests largely upon this element of opportunity, situational crime prevention does not necessarily view everyone who breaks a law as deviant (Clarke 198; 1983). The decision whether or not to commit a specific crime largely rests upon the opportunity at which the crime is presented and the rewards from exploiting that opportunity are sufficient to offset the possible efforts and risks (Clarke 1980; 1983; Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008).

Situational crime prevention consists of five major approaches to its prevention. Each approach addresses a specific aspect of the decision-making process that can culminate in the commission of an offence. They include: increasing the perceived effects associated with its commission; increasing perceived risks of detection; reducing perceived rewards; reducing provocations; and removing excuses (Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008, 53).

As humans are viewed as ever-changing, situational crime prevention always allows for the possibility that an approach that has proven successful in one location or

site may not be as effective in another (Clark 1983; Felson 1995; Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008). Techniques to prevent crime are constantly evolving as the characteristics of one site and its problems differ in slight but important ways. Preventative strategies that have developed out of situational research are divided into measures which (1) reduce the physical opportunities for offending or (2) increase the chances of an offender being caught (Clarke 1980, 139). Therefore, increasing the chances of being caught usually means attempting to raise the chances of an offender being seen by someone who is likely to take action against them (Clarke 1980).

Conclusion

In conclusion, these studies point to the value of using framing theory as a means to understanding how news reporting has shaped public perception of the Internet as a medium which assists in the perpetuation of child sexual abuse, specifically online luring. In particular, the framing of luring incidents in news media perpetuates and exacerbates parental fear that all minors using Internet technology will be at risk of having harmful experiences with online sex offenders. Crime prevention theory provides an additional framework which highlights the importance of parents and legal guardians to situational prevention. As online grooming of minors encompasses complex dynamics, any additional support in diverting sexual solicitation is vital to crime prevention.

Although literature remains strong on Internet child luring within Canada's North American counterpart, Canadian studies remain limited. No study in Canada has directly examined the implications of sexual solicitation, harassment, or exposure to unwanted sexual materials to minors. Also, there has been no study that has examined media's potential influence upon perceptions of readers on Internet use by minors and cyberspace

more generally. Therefore, due to the limited Canadian research on media representations of this phenomenon, this study significantly contributes to the knowledge in this field by highlighting the possible implications of this depiction. The next section of this thesis provides the methodological framework employed in this project to highlight the role of Canadian print media in the rhetorical construction of Internet child luring and how those constructs potentially shape public perceptions.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to analyse the ways in which four Canadian newspapers construct Internet child luring and crime prevention and how readers perceive and make sense of this crime. The methodological approach is a qualitative and quantitative researched content analysis of the *Vancouver Sun*, *Toronto Star*, *Montreal Gazette*, and *National Post*. It is intended that through the application of framing theory and crime prevention theory that this study will highlight the possible implications Canadian print media has upon parental monitoring of their children's Internet use. The four research questions that will be examined in this study are: (1) who is portrayed as primarily responsible for the protection of minors who use Internet technology; (2) how do newspapers within Canada portray Internet use by minors; (3) how do they construct the risks associated with Internet technology more generally; (4) and what were the methods provided for crime prevention for parents and legal guardians to implement.

3.1 Sample

The *Toronto Star*, *Vancouver Sun*, and *Montreal Gazette* were selected as they provide a regional perspective on crime reporting in some of the biggest urban centers across Canada. The *National Post* was selected as it offers a national perspective in its reporting on Canadian issues. All four English newspapers were considered commercial papers that cover Canadian, as well as International political issues. Newspaper articles were preferred for analysis as they are generally more accessible and indexed than other news sources (e.g. television, Internet, radio). Each paper relies largely on written narratives rather than numerical figures to communicate information. This is due to the large portion of newspaper content dedicated to the reporting of crime related topics (Surette 1992; Cohen 2002). Newspaper articles during a 96 month period, between

January 1st 2002 and December 31st 2010, were collected. A content analysis was undertaken qualitatively and quantitatively to highlight some of the significant themes and pattern that thread throughout the various selected newspaper articles.

To locate these articles, *Canadian Newsstand* database by ProQuest Multimedia was employed to provide access to each of these newspapers. The database is limited in its ability to provide images and physical layout of each article. However, the database provides full access to all *Vancouver Sun*, *Toronto Star*, *Montreal Gazette*, and *National Post* articles. The start date of this study coincided with the same year (2002) Luring legislation was enacted. The start date of January 1st 2002 of the study was six months prior to the legislation coming into force in order to capture any discussion on Internet luring during Bill-C15's introductory readings.

Citation and document text searches of *Canadian Newsstand* for the *Vancouver Sun*, *Toronto Star*, *Montreal Gazette*, and *National Post* databases were conducted. The sampling frame was constructed using the words "cyberspace," "Internet," and "web" that were connected together with "lure," "luring," and "lured." All articles discussing Internet child luring were included in the study, regardless of the length of the article. Duplicate publications on different days were also included in the analysis.

3.2 Analysis

Content analysis is a widely used qualitative and quantitative research technique employed by social scientists. Quantification is not a defining criterion for content analysis. Text is "...always qualitative to begin with, categorizing textual units is considered the most elementary form of measurement, and a content analysis may well result in verbal answers to a research question" (Krippendorff 2004, 87). Using numbers

instead of verbal categories or counting instead of listing quotes is simply convenient; it is not viewed as a condition for obtaining valid answers to a research question. In contrast to hermeneutics, content analysis concerns itself only with the explicit meaning of a word used, rather than assessing text to establish necessary truths and meaning (Krippendorff 2004).

Content analysis is considered more than being a single method; current applications of content analysis "...demonstrate three distinct approaches: conventional, direct, or summative" (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1277). The major differences among the approaches are in the coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness. Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah Shannon (2005) assert that conventional content analysis coding categories are derived directly from the text data. The direct approach analysis starts with a theory or relevant research finding as a guide to construct codes. A summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretative of the underlying context. Therefore, researchers regard content analysis as a flexible method for analyzing text data (Krippendorff 2004).

To operationalize these patterns and themes that develop throughout the articles, a closed-ended coding scheme was developed as a way to assess the printed articles (See Figure 3.2 A). In this closed-ended coding scheme, eight categories were constructed and examined in each article. The categories are: article distribution, preventative accountability, suggested preventative strategies, risks associated with the Internet, general fears associated with Internet technology, portrayal of luring legislation and its enforcement, portrayal of the offender, and portrayal of the victim. The data sheets highlight the frequency with which concepts occur and the strength of associations

between these particular concepts (Krippendorff 2004). This study only employed one coder who collected and analyzed each newspaper article. The coder examined and categorized the text within each print narrative as per the eight developed research categories. Due to the scope and data size of this project, the spreadsheets were analyzed and the calculations were conducted manually as opposed to using any database software. However, future studies using multiple data sources and larger samples could utilize database software to assist in examining more complex narratives.

3.3 Framing Theory

Framing theory was used to provide a theoretical understanding as to how media interprets, produces, and projects crime issues in society. Framing theory was an appropriate theoretical framework to apply as it assists in understanding how print media constructs Internet child luring and crime prevention in Canada. Mass media has taken on an important role informing citizens of current and important crime stories that develop in a given culture. Framing theory was exercised in this project to capture framing effects that are produced through Canadian print media in its news-making process. As crime related stories capture the attention of society, atypical crime stories that involve children and youth inevitably cultivate compassion for the victim, as well as apprehension against the crime in communities.

3.4 Crime Prevention Theory

Crime prevention theory allows the analysis to understand why parents are essential in developing barriers of protection against perpetrators. Parents and legal guardians are perceived as the primary guardianship due to inherent social bonds which are imperative to protect minors who are considered in need of protection due to the age

of consent laws in Canada. As situational crime prevention rests upon the assumption that all individuals in society are key players in the safety of others, minors are particularly important due to their age and developmental vulnerabilities. Situational crime prevention was central to this study as parents and legal guardians perform duties on an everyday basis that constitute some form of situational protection (such as limiting or monitoring Internet use, educating children on dangers, and providing support when problems arise). The ordinary trials and tribulations of parenthood do not prepare a parent for the possible criminal victimization of their child. Many parents rely upon sources that only provide a fraction of the information they need regarding the dynamics of crime. With limited layout space in newspapers, an article is predisposed to illuminating only fragments of information on a particular crime.

Figure: 3.2 A

Data Collection Sheet

Date of Publication: **Documentation Identification: No:**

Title:

Name of Author:

What Newspaper:

Section Located within Newspaper:

Word Length of Article:

Article Focus:

Portrayal of Luring Legislation and its Enforcement:

Portrayal of the offender:

Portrayal of the Victim:

Risks Associated with the Internet:

Prevention Accountability:

Fears Associated with Internet Use More Generally:

Suggested Prevention Strategies:

Demographic Variables:

Offender Age:

Offender Occupation:

Geographic Location of Offence:

Victim Age/Gender:

Analysis

4.1 Article Distribution

The study's 96 month duration amassed 260 articles for analysis, with an almost even distribution amongst all four newspapers. Although individual papers averaged less than one Internet child luring publication each 28-31 days (depending on the month), collectively the four papers discussed Internet child luring approximately 2.7 articles per month (See Table: 4.1 A). The articles were collected from January 1, 2002 until December 31, 2010 to capture any article that discussed Internet child luring in four Canadian newspapers. Three papers, *Vancouver Sun*, *Toronto Star*, and *Montreal Gazette*, were regional newspapers and the *National Post* was included to provide a Canadian national perspective on Internet child luring.

Number of Articles Collected

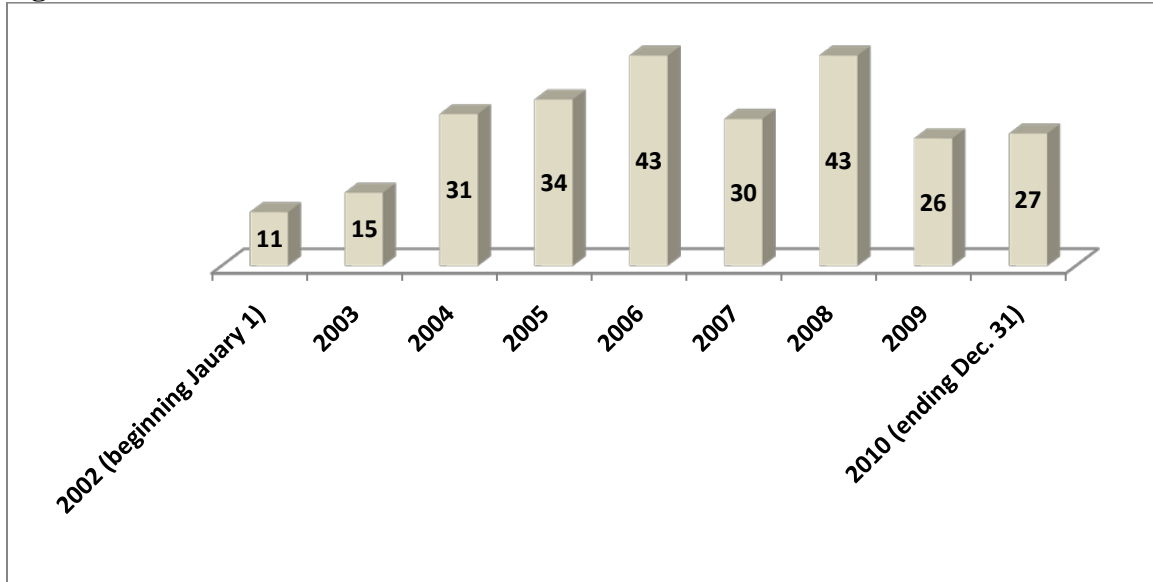
Table: 4.1 A

	Number of collected articles	Percentage of Total	Average number of articles by month
Vancouver Sun	66	25%	.69
Toronto Star	63	24%	.66
Montreal Gazette	69	27%	.72
National Post	62	24%	.65
Total	260	100%	2.7

Upon the enactment of section 172.1 in the Canadian Criminal Code, Canadian papers started to focus their attention on what seemed to be a mounting issue on Internet luring of minors. As the years progressed, increased attention was given to persons accused, convicted or sentenced for luring offences. In the years of 2006 and 2008, there was a spike in publications discussing Internet child luring with 86 stories collectively published by the four Canadian newspapers (See Figure 4.1 A).

Number of Articles Published by Year

Figure: 4.1 A



4.2 Article Location

The majority of the 260 articles were published in the first section¹ of each daily newspaper (196 articles or 75 percent). The *Montreal Gazette* printed 96 percent of the Internet child luring articles within the first section. The *National Post* closely followed with 94 percent in the first section. The *Toronto Star* and *Vancouver Sun* only printed 55 percent and 56 percent in the first section, respectively. Remaining articles that were not printed in the first section of the paper were located in various sections that focus on locally based stories that are of interest to that particular community. The lead section generally provides stories that have marketability and are of societal importance which should captivate readers. A story's "newsworthiness" is often chosen for its agenda-setting elements and targeted for a particular audience (Entman 1993; Jewkes 2004). Therefore, reporting on Internet child luring was mostly situated in the "A" section of all four papers, which makes these stories readily available for casual readers. From these

¹ Generally the first 15 pages of the daily paper which focus on current lead stories.

findings, it is clear that all four Canadian newspapers considered the article content to be of public interest and appeal, therefore labelling these stories as highly newsworthy.

4.3 Prevention Accountability

Prevention accountability was constructed as a research category to evaluate who the newspapers deemed to be the most appropriate body to implement safety strategies for protecting minors against luring. Descriptive statistics and a textual analysis were conducted to highlight possible anxiety-provoking rhetoric that contributes to an overall concern about threats to the safety of minors in cyberspace. Of the study's 260 articles, a total of 58 (22%) articles discussed prevention. The *Vancouver Sun* discussed responsibility for the safety of minors using the World Wide Web (WWW) more than any of the other three newspapers with 20 articles or 34% of the total articles documented. The least amount of attention given to accountability was from the *National Post*, which discussed accountability for luring prevention in only 10 articles (17%). Collectively, the four papers direct attention to five distinct types of entities that can assist in either regulating Internet use by offenders or monitoring use by minors in order to help prevent Internet child luring: parents and legal guardians, government intervention (legislation/justice system/law enforcement), software companies, advocacy organizations, and school administration.

Of the 58 articles, the majority of prevention accountability was captured in the parents and legal guardian category with 34 articles (58.6%) expressing the importance of this group to "...fully participate and be aware of their children's activities when they are online,"² since "...chat rooms can be dangerous for younger children"³ and "...children

² McCabe-Lokos, N. "Girl, 11, missing 16 hours after on-line contact." *Toronto Star*, October 15, 2002: pA.2.

must be protected.”⁴ As parents and legal guardians are a receptive audience concerned about Internet safety for minors, print media urged this group to oversee and monitor their children’s online behaviours. However, simply urging parents and legal guardians to control, watch, or educate their children may not be effective in many situations (Wolak et al. 2008).

Several articles frame the responsibility of parents in particular ways that projected contradictory ideas about how parents should approach safety measures for their children while online. Four articles acknowledged that some “parents don’t feel comfortable around computers,”⁵ or as comfortable as their children. However, the overwhelming majority of articles express that parents need to be “vigilant”⁶ in “finding out who their kids are spending time with and what they are doing online.”⁷ Although it would seem sensible to provide safety information for parents and caregivers, publishing articles which reinforce the inadequacies of parents in using computer technology is at odds with the recommendation that parents be aware of what their children are doing online. Along these lines, Livingston & Bober (2005) also found in a UK survey on computer experiences that parents frequently feel less computer literate than their children, and thus feel incapable of supervising their online activities. A more constructive and less frequent suggestion was for parents to develop “an open line of

³ Wilton, K. “E-mail might provide key clue: Varennes teenager missing 11 days.” *Montreal Gazette*, October 1, 2002: pA.7.

⁴ Kleiss, K. “Online predator faked identity to lure ‘hundreds.’” *Montreal Gazette*, August 22, 2007: pA.13.

⁵ Black, D. “Streetproof Kids about dangers online.” *Toronto Star*, March 10, 2003: pE.06. See also: Wilton, K. “E-mail might provide key clue: Varennes teenager missing 11 days.” *Montreal Gazette*, October 1, 2002: pA.7. See also: Aly, H. “Dozens of girls lured into sex on web cam.” *Toronto Star*, July 29, 2006: pA.1.

⁶ Radia, A. “Canadian kids the most vulnerable to Internet luring.” *Vancouver Sun*, September 4, 2007: pA.11. See also: Sun, J. “Man accused of luring girl online.” *Vancouver Sun*, January 21, 2008: pB.1.

⁷ Hall, N. “Eight more charges in child porn investigation.” *Vancouver Sun*, March 11, 2010: pA.5.

communication with their children”⁸ on their Internet use, which does not require parents to be well-versed in Internet applications or technologies. Further, providing information on particular workshops or seminars on Internet technology would assist concerned parents with their uncertain feelings about this technology while reducing parental anxiety. The integration of educational workshops in communities would equip parents and legal guardians with tools required to create and maintain a safer online experience for their children, while maintaining situational protection against potential offenders.

In an article by Scott Stinson, a detective clearly states that he “hears all the time about children who have a computer in the bedroom with a Web cam and a high-speed Internet connection... [who] could be lured away because mom and dad aren’t even checking on them.”⁹ The overt call by print media for parents to actively participate in the child’s every movement on the Internet foments panic as many parents are occupied with other responsibilities which make it difficult for parents to supervise their children at all times. Moreover, Internet accessibility is not limited to the household as computers are readily available at libraries, schools and other households. The multiple locations at which access is available could potentially challenge the opportunity-reducing techniques used in situational crime protection implemented by parents. Broadband capability in the early 2000s and the convergence of communication platforms and mediums have accelerated the uptake and access to the Internet, so that many portable devices now also allow easy access to Internet-based communications (Atkinson and Newton 2010). For parents to be continuously instructed to monitor their children situates them in an impossible position. Additional articles that portray the justice system as lacking

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Stinson, S. “Swim Coach charged with possessing child porn.” National Post, March 24, 2005: pA.12

constitutional clarity while sometimes having “failed all of us”¹⁰ in the prosecution of Internet luring offenders then further builds upon existing anxiety for parents who have children using the Internet.

Government intervention was the second category which received considerable attention when discussing responsibility in safeguarding minors in Canadian society. Of the 58 articles documented, 17 (29.3%) discussed the need for government agencies to assist in diminishing the growing problem of Internet luring. These articles targeted government agencies by asserting that “children have to be protected by society as a whole and that includes the courts.”¹¹ The main concerns for government intervention was the development of new offences or restructuring existing ones that would allow “for stricter laws and punishment”¹² towards Internet sex offenders. Support of the government was demonstrated in the articles by framing the Harper government as “taking aim”¹³ against sexual predators “who exploit children with a bill that raises the age of consent by two years.”¹⁴

Another accountability associated with prevention was focused on intervention of police agencies, which routinely track and monitor possible offender’s online (Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2003b). Betsy Powell’s article recognized that, “police are taking some responsibility in capturing predators by posing in police strings in chat rooms.”¹⁵ The RCMP has also made a point of “joining international efforts to openly check chat rooms”¹⁶ in aiming to protect kids. Reporting that government agencies are

¹⁰ Levy, H. “Internet luring sentence sparks outrage.” *Toronto Star*, November 25, 2003: pB.05.

¹¹ Kari, S. “Man jailed for trying to lure girl, 13, on Internet.” *National Post*, April 29, 2005: pA.12

¹² O’brian, A. “Bill protecting kids from predators get first test.” *Vancouver Sun*, January 17, 2004: pA.4.

¹³ Samyn, P. “Raising consent age won’t outlaw teen love.” *Vancouver Sun*, July 23, 2006: pA.4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Powell, B. “Targeting those who target children.” *Tonto Star*, October 11, 2003: pA.29.

¹⁶ Boswell, R. “Police ‘in uniform’ to patrol Internet.” *Vancouver Sun*, June 11/ 2004: pA.11.

taking initiative in protecting adolescents online provides some reassurance for citizens as “people feel safer when police are present.”¹⁷ However, several articles focused on various police agencies that had arrested their own officers for luring minors online.¹⁸ Although the vast majority of police sting operations have proven successful, media reporting on these officer offending cases could diminish parental confidence in police agencies. Several articles did recommend government intervention as a primary source for prevention accountability but parents and legal guardians still remain at the forefront as the most significant actors able to protect children from Internet luring.

The last three categories, software companies that develop Internet applications and social networking sites, charitable organizations, and school administration only captured a few articles that focused on their possible efforts to help protect children when online. Software companies caught the attention of five articles (8.6%) as being able to produce technological solutions that would aid in protecting minors while online. Software companies were called upon to become “more vigilant in protecting young children from predators through various applications in their programs.”¹⁹ Microsoft Corporation agreed with the further modifications to their chat room services as these “...chat services are increasingly being misused for spam and inappropriate communications.”²⁰ Charitable organizations and school administration are only mentioned once each in two articles. The last two categories were included in the findings to demonstrate the emphasis Canadian newspapers put upon parents and legal

¹⁷ Boswell, R. “RCMP to enter chat rooms to deter pedophiles.” *National Post*, June 11, 2004: pA.20.

¹⁸ Claxton, M. “Former Mountie in court on child luring charge.” *Vancouver Sun*, June 17, 2006: pB.3. See also: Fowlie, J. “Ex-Mounties accused of child-luring.” *Vancouver Sun*, May 31/ 2006: pB.1. See also: Bramham, D. “Trust the police, we teach our children.” *Vancouver Sun*, June 16, 2007: pC.4. See also: Wilson, V. “Mountie ‘knew what my age was.’” *Vancouver Sun*, June 6, 2007: pB.5.

¹⁹ Reitz, S. “Networking site sets new child safeguards.” *Toronto Star*, May 9, 2008: pA.2.

²⁰ Teel, G., & Uglig, R. “Microsoft to end free chat service in 28 countries.” *Vancouver Sun*, September 24, 2003: pA.6.

guardians, rather than other sources, as being essential in the situational protection of minors against Internet child luring.

4.4 Suggested Prevention Strategies

Several key trends were identified as primary prevention strategies to assist in diminishing child Internet luring in Canada. Crime prevention theory suggests that situational crime prevention requires individuals to manage, design, and manipulate surroundings to reduce the opportunity for crime and increase its risks as perceived by a wide range of offenders (Clarke 1983, 225). Parental monitoring and educating of minors and legislative creation/modification were the two leading solutions provided. Surprisingly, of the 260 articles collected, few articles listed prevention strategies for readers to educate themselves and apply to their children's safety. Only 52 articles (20%) provided any discussion of prevention strategies. The *Vancouver Sun* published the majority of articles having 25 (48%), and the *National Post* reported the least amount of articles with only 6 (10%) articles on strategies. Adding to parents' potential fear of the unknown in cyberspace and its regulation, providing safety tips would seem appropriate to assist in educating parents and legal guardians and other readers on tactics to diminish this phenomenon. Although some articles provide various solutions, the overwhelming majority did not.

The most common solution provided was for "parents to monitor their children's Internet use."²¹ It was often noted that the number one thing "parents can do as far as Internet safety goes,"²² is for them to "move the computer from the child's bedroom"²³

²¹ Hall, N. "Internet has a dark side." *Vancouver Sun*, March 27, 2003: pB.7. See also: Huffman, T. "Man faces charge of luring." *Toronto Star*, April 16, 2005: pB.03. See also: N.A. "Child prostitute alleges she was lured to Victoria." *Vancouver Sun*, November 18, 2008: pA.18.

²² Hansen, D. "Internet Predator may have lured boy." *Vancouver Sun* January 27, 2006: pB.1.

and to place it in “a common area of the house like a family room”²⁴ to allow “parents to be more aware of what their kids are doing on the Internet.”²⁵ Few articles acknowledge the evolution of Internet technology in terms of the advancement of cell phone devices that now provide access to all sorts of Internet applications. No articles mentioned any prevention strategies for minors using mobile devices. The majority of articles providing advice for protection focused primarily on basic guidelines, such as the relocation of a computer and parental involvement in a child’s online behaviours. With the rapid advancement in mobile and Internet technology, these tips seem inadequate and outdated.

Along with relocating the computer, parents were also encouraged to educate their children on the dangers of the Internet, and especially chat rooms.²⁶ This advice is in keeping with the NOV-J U.S national survey, which reported that 76% of first encounters between offender and victims happen in chat rooms (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004). Most articles, however, provided simplistic strategies for counteracting the dangers of chat rooms, such as telling children to “...never give out their name, address or any form of identification if they meet someone online.”²⁷ This strategy ignores the dynamics of grooming common to most cases of online luring, and instead imagines an offender who stalks the child. More productive safety strategies suggest that parents centre education of their adolescent children on the particular behaviours of “predators

²³ Pron, N. “Jail time for online predator.” *Toronto Star*, July 19, 2005: pB.03.

²⁴ Cleverley, B. “Keep tabs on kids’ Internet use, police warn after girls lured.” *Vancouver Sun*, November 2005: pB.9. See also: Sun, J. “Man accused of luring girl online.” *Vancouver Sun*, January 21, 2008: pB.1. See also: Buckstein, J. “Cyberspace predators target teens.” *Vancouver Sun*, March 12, 2008: pD.5. See also: Hall, N. “Eight more charges in child porn investigation.” *Vancouver sun*, March 11, 2010: pA.5.

²⁵ Hansen, D. “Internet predator may have lured boy,” pB.1. See also: Hall, N. “Missing girl learns of search, turns herself in,” pA.1.

²⁶ Wilton, K. “E-mail might provide key clue: Varennes teenager missing 11 days,” pA.7. See also: Kohler, N. “Pastor charged: Accused of luring girl.” *Montreal Gazette*, August 11, 2005: pA.10.

²⁷ Todd, P. “Ex-principal busted for luring children: Accused of using Net to meet girl.” *Montreal Gazette*, August 8, 2003: pA.7.

and the dangers of lurking on the Internet.”²⁸ However, detailed information about perpetrators and their behaviour was not readily available in any of the four Canadian papers. More usefully, some articles focused on creating a “web safety plan”²⁹ to develop an open dialogue between parent and child.

Very little information was provided on exactly what the dangers of the Internet are, and where parents and legal guardians can go to educate themselves about the latest computer software, Internet technology, and other important elements of a computer. This information might have been taught in their child’s classroom, but parents may lack this important information as their experience with computer use may be minimal, at least until the generation that grew up with the Internet become parents of teenagers. Some measure of “generation gap” is likely to persist, however, since youth are typically early adopters of new social applications and an ever-growing number of chat rooms and social networking sites are being produced (Greenfield 2004; Pew Internet American Life Project 2005; Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008; Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2006), leaving many parents uninformed as to what each site’s messaging capacities are and how to manoeuvre around such sites. Since youth tend to be more knowledgeable at using and changing networking sites on a regular basis, they can easily disguise any chat conversations from parents, making it difficult to “observe who their children are talking to.”³⁰

A second solution focused on new legislation or clarification of current legislation as well as the assistance of law enforcement. A year after the luring law was enacted,

²⁸ N.A. “Danger lurks in Internet recesses.” *Toronto Star*, March 1, 2007: pA.26. See also: McCabe-Lokos, N. “Girl, 11, missing 16 hours after on-line contact.” *Toronto Star*, October 15, 2002: pA.02.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Pron, N. “Jail time for online predator,” pB.03.

articles were already asserting that this legislation required more “development in its clarity”³¹ and needed to be “applied more frequently.”³² Amy O’Brian’s editorial, for instance, focused on the development of legislation that would provide authorities with additional support to charge someone outside of Canadian boundaries to assist in the fight against child sexual exploitation.³³

Raising the age of consent was a topic of discussion in several articles, prior to the coming into force of Bill C-2 on May 1st 2008, suggesting that this increase in age of consent would serve as an additional barrier to adult-child relationships within Canada.³⁴ News articles also portrayed legislative amendments increasing penalties for child pornography and luring offences as another important step in protecting children, where one such amendment would “double the maximum penalty from five to 10 years for a luring conviction if it is prosecuted as an indictable offence.”³⁵ By pushing for tougher laws, these legislative changes “better reflect the seriousness of the crime”³⁶ and hopefully deter potential offenders from partaking in their deviant behaviours.

Only a few articles provide solutions that could be implemented by software companies and social networking sites. A “report abuse”³⁷ button was implemented by Microsoft UK to provide support for children that experience inappropriate behaviour online. The button would immediately contact trained police officers “who would help the child gather and preserve the crucial cyber-evidence.”³⁸ Another tactic implemented

³¹ Mulgrew, L. “Children’s biggest threat is the Internet.” Vancouver Sun, July 17, 2003: pA.4.

³² Mulgrew, L. “Children’s biggest threat is the Internet,” pA.4.

³³ O’Brian, A. “Bill protecting kids from predators gets first test,” pA.4.

³⁴ Samyn, P. “Raising consent age won’t outlaw teen love, Toews says,” pA.4.

³⁵ O’Neil, P. “Internet child-luring law passes major hurdle.” Vancouver Sun, February 6, 2007: pA.6.

³⁶ Talaga, T. “Federal bill seeks to protect kids from sex predators.” Toronto Star, November 5, 2010: pA.12.

³⁷ Sher, J. “911 for our children on the Web.” Vancouver Sun, May 4, 2009: pA.9.

³⁸ Sher, J. “911 for our children on the Web,” pA.9.

by MySpace was to “place restrictions on how adults may contact younger MySpace users.”³⁹ Facebook, a social networking site, was also taking aim at sexual predators by increasing security protection and “adding more than 40 new safeguards to protect young users.”⁴⁰

One article went as far as to suggest the development of a portable scanner that reads “the age of bones and uses the information to deny or grant access”⁴¹ to children-only chat and other age appropriate Web sites while blocking perpetrators pretending to be underage. However, no other articles discussed this proposal any further and the idea remained undeveloped. Articles that project eccentric inventions, such as a bone scanner, demonstrate a desire for a foolproof solution to protecting children online.

4.5 Risks Associated with the Internet

Eighty-six articles discussed risks associated with minors using the Internet. The *Montreal Gazette* was most inclined to provide information on the dangers of the Internet with 30 (35%) articles published. Further analysis revealed three dominant themes on Internet risks. The first theme focused on the trolling perpetrator who lures unsuspecting victims in chat rooms and on social networking sites. The second asserts that anonymity of the Internet is a key risk for minors as adults sometimes use deceit when presenting their age or gender to minors. The third theme suggests that children are and have been easily duped into sexual behaviour while online by perpetrators who manipulate the child’s emotional vulnerabilities.

Of the 86 articles, 41 assert stranger danger as a serious threat to minors online. The *Vancouver Sun* states that “chat rooms are a very dangerous place for a child to

³⁹ N.A. “MySpace sued in sex abuse of teen.” *Toronto Star*, Jan 19, 2007: pA.3.

⁴⁰ Reitz, S. “Networking site sets new child safeguards,” pA.2.

⁴¹ Staples, S. “Bone scan could protect kids on Web.” *Montreal Gazette*, February 21, 2005: pA.20.

be.”⁴² The president of Beyond Borders, Rosalind Prober, claims that it is within these chat rooms that “89 per cent of sexual solicitations were made”⁴³ by prowling perpetrators searching for victims. Social networking sites, such as Facebook or MySpace, are also presented as known targets for predators. Instant messaging was further identified as “a popular form of Internet use for older children...it is also one of the most popular ways a child offender will try to get to kids.”⁴⁴ Some articles claim that children put themselves inadvertently at risk by “filling out profiles with their age, school, E-mail address and dating preferences...some even use their real names,”⁴⁵ in “relatively innocuous or safe areas of the Internet.”⁴⁶ This allows for perpetrators to establish rapport with victims using their information to “reduce their inhibitions; or by prurient discourse that exploits a young person’s curiosity, immaturity or precocious sexuality.”⁴⁷

Of the 86 articles, 23 discussed anonymity that the Internet offers for its users as a dangerous feature, especially for minors innocently chatting on the Internet; a finding also supported in the academic literature (Kierkegaard 2008). The *Vancouver Sun* also asserts that, “luring is rampant because of the anonymity of the Internet.”⁴⁸ It is the anonymity of the Internet that perpetrators thrive on as their identity is completely concealed, while projecting an alternative persona (Dombrowski, Gischler, and Durst 2007; Hayne and Rice 2007), such that “those who prey on the Internet that can

⁴² Teel, G. “Microsoft to end free chat rooms service in 28 counties,” pA.6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ N.A. “Child-proofing the Internet.” National Post, August 21, 2006: pJV.

⁴⁵ Cleverley, B. “Keep tabs on kids’ Internet use, police warn after girls lured,” pB.9.

⁴⁶ Kohler, N. “Evangelical pastor charged with trying to meet girl after sexual online chat.” *Vancouver Sun*, August 11, 2005: pA.4.

⁴⁷ MacCharles, T. “Online ‘grooming’ of kids ruled a crime.” *Toronto Star*, December 4, 2009: pA.17.

⁴⁸ Radia, A. “Canadian kids the most vulnerable to Internet luring.” p39.

effectively impersonate anyone, any age, and any sex they wish.”⁴⁹ For example, the *Montreal Gazette* reports that a male “posed as both a young man and a young woman during his correspondence...to lure an Edmonton teenager into undressing for him and threatened to ‘do bad things’ to her if she did not continue to perform these acts.”⁵⁰ The *Toronto Star* also reports on a case where the offender “claimed to be 17,”⁵¹ when in reality his true age was actually 32.

The final theme in this section was captured in 22 articles which portrayed minors as being at significant risk to the manipulative offender who dupes his victims into online sexual behaviours on webcams. A webcam is a digital camera which allows for one user to send their live image to another viewer to download and watch. The images are generally streamed in real-time to the viewing audience, but software is available to record and save video or photographs out of the live stream. Online perpetrators befriend their victims using ‘grooming’ tactics (Berson 2003; Kierkegaard 2008; Livingston and Bober 2005; Maczewski 2002; Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2006; Wolak et al. 2008), and then convince them to appear nude or perform sex acts on their webcams. The saved videos or photos can then be used to extort further sexual activity from the victim. For example, the *National Post* disclosed a story where “an online predator hacked into several girls’ Internet chat accounts to gain access to other youngsters and lure them into posing erotically on webcams for him.”⁵² In another article, a 25-year-old man from Montreal “coaxed girls into transmitting live ‘cam shows’ via webcam, while giving

⁴⁹ Mulgrew, I. “Children’s biggest threat is the Internet.” Vancouver Sun, July 17, 2003: pA.4.

⁵⁰ N.A. “Montrealer set to face Internet luring charges in Alberta.” Montreal Gazette, February 17, 2007: pA.11.

⁵¹ MacCharles, T. “Online ‘grooming’ of kids ruled a crime,” pA.17.

⁵² Alcoba, N. “Child porn bust has U.K links.” National Post, July 29, 2006: pA.4.

directions through an online instant messaging service.”⁵³ He also used “multiple online personas to ‘groom’ and manipulate the girls.”⁵⁴

Although literature suggests the Internet provides a convenient mode of communication and access to a wealth of information (Dombrowski, Gischler, and Durst 2007), news articles consistently stress that it poses a great danger, especially if it is allowed to be lawless. No articles explicitly discuss the positive attributes of the Internet that would suggest it qualifies as a technology that should be embraced by minors for its multi-purpose advantages. Internet luring is said to be “far more prevalent than most people think and a far greater threat than even most suspect.”⁵⁵ Print media that primarily frame news stories on the ‘dark side of the Internet’ primarily produce anxiety and panic, and may undermine parents’ capacity to appreciate the positive features of Internet use for youth. Research indicates that many youth do not report cyber abuse to parents or teachers. This is because many children and youth fear that upon disclosing incidents of cyber victimization, their parents would remove their Internet or cell phone privileges (Mishna et al. 2010). If parents are not informed by their own children of cyber abuse through open communication, difficulty arises in creating a safe online environment in a household.

4.6 General Fears Associated with Internet Technology

The Internet has become an overwhelmingly important business and entertainment tool in Canada’s contemporary society. However, the Internet has sometimes compromised the safety of minors exploring cyberspace. A Canadian judge expressed concern that “children now use the Internet for everything, including their

⁵³ Kleiss, K. “Online predator faked identity to lure ‘hundreds,’” pA.13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Mulgrew, I. “Children’s biggest threat is the Internet,” pA.4.

studies, entertainment, and communicating with the world around them...this makes them easy prey.”⁵⁶ In less than two decades, the Internet has shifted from being a communication medium by some to an everyday tool used in our homes, schools, workplaces and travel (Davidson and Gottschalk 2011). All four newspapers discussed general fears that are associated with the Internet. Of the 260 articles, 65 (25%) constructed the Internet as a general threat to minors. Three dominant themes developed in the articles about the general issues of the Internet. First, the articles often referred to the Internet as having minimal security for minors. Second, the Internet was portrayed as intrusive in the personal lives of families. Lastly, the general accessibility of the Internet was of concern. All three themes were established as anxiety-provoking issues for parents or guardians.

Twenty-seven articles made mention of the lack of security the Internet provides for its users. The safety concerns of “children using the Internet has surged”,⁵⁷ as sometimes in luring investigations it is “hard-to-trace communication and content”⁵⁸ in chat room logs that would assist in the prosecution of a sex offender. The *Vancouver Sun* discusses how “children in Canada are not so lucky”⁵⁹ because unlike Internet and software companies in the United States, Canadian counterparts have not developed a 911 “virtual” button for users to alert authorities of suspicious behaviour. Fear about the Internet is exacerbated when articles focus their attention on websites popular with youth, like MySpace and Facebook, and assert that MySpace, for instance, “has become a lightning rod for warnings about online sexual predators” and “boasts some 72 million

⁵⁶ Montgomery, S. “Father of 3 gets 10 years for luring girls.” *Montreal Gazette*, August 5, 2010: pA.7

⁵⁷ Martell, D. “Yahoo chat rooms shut over links to child sex.” *Toronto Star*, June 24, 2005: pA.04.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Sher, J. “911 for our children on the web,” pA.9.

users,”⁶⁰ or that the “Internet offers a wide range of opportunities to sexual predators, and they are using them.”⁶¹

Security measures were deemed sometimes insufficient and inadequate because of the wide range of opportunities that allow any computer savvy individual to construct new social networking sites, chat rooms and blog forums. This could be done by simply obtaining an unused website URL and completing some web development on this particular page. However, these newly constructed websites are sometimes created by anonymous administrators, who have the opportunity to conceal their identities due to the lack of security in Internet technology arising from its decentralized configuration. The network pathways created by Internet child sex offenders include, but are not limited to, the construction of sites to be used as an exchange of information, experiences and pornographic images; organised criminal activities that use children for prostitution purposes and that produce indecent images of children at a professional level (Davidson and Martellozzo 2005).

The second theme was captured in 20 articles which focused on the Internet as being an intrusive element in a households’ domain. The Internet was often referred to as “frightening that someone can come into our homes and exploit our children without us knowing,”⁶² as it is “quite obvious that this type of Internet crime is without borders.”⁶³ These articles are alluding to the Internet as a gateway that, in some ways, directly connects with children without them leaving the safety of their private households (Davidson and Martellozzo 2005). In the *National Post*, “experts say the cross-border

⁶⁰ Powell, B. “Suspect used MySpace to ‘lure’ girl, 13.” *Toronto Star*, July 12, 2006: pA.1.

⁶¹ Loyie, F. “Internet chat was sex lure.” *Montreal Gazette*, May 23, 2002: p131.

⁶² Montgomery, S. “Belgian man not a sex maniac, Lawyer says.” *Montreal Gazette*, July 4, 2008: pA.6.

⁶³ Aly, H. “Dozens of girls lured into sex on webcam.” *Toronto Star*, July 29, 2006: pA.1.

cases highlight the ease with which sex criminals can reach into the homes of young victims hundreds and thousands of kilometres away, even when separated by international boundaries.”⁶⁴ The underlying tone that resonates through these articles is that sex offenders are online to snatch your young child with great ease due to Internet technology. This can be achieved “because predators easily pick up signs of vulnerability, such as loneliness, lack of close interpersonal relationships or difficulties at home.”⁶⁵ These attributes have been associated in contemporary research to high-risk Internet users (Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak 2000; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Michelle 2004; Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor 2003a). When parents read about personal privacy and security in a household being jeopardized at the hands of others, a sense of exaggerated fear can develop.

Lastly, 18 articles discussed the Internet as being easily accessible to minors as well as perpetrators. Although age was not specified, one article put forth that children “don’t need open chat forums.”⁶⁶ Social networking sites have become central to teen social life, however, and it would seem unreasonable to expect adolescents to refrain from all online chat forums. It is important to note that the negotiation of responsibility allotted to teens by parents is different than that allotted to children, and chat rooms are generally used by adolescents to maintain social friendships online (Maczewski 2002; Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004). Nonetheless, newspapers regularly cast online forums as inherently dangerous, as for instance the *Montreal Gazette* reported that libraries should block access to chat rooms and told of a librarian who “watches

⁶⁴ Blackwell, T. “Pedophiles targeting Canadian kids.” National Post, May 17, 2004: pA.4.

⁶⁵ Buckstein, J. “Cyberspace predators target teens,” pD.5. f

⁶⁶ Shaw, G. “Predators can access kids’ chat rooms.” Vancouver Sun, November 8, 2008: pA.11.

helplessly as teens regularly sign in to chat rooms.”⁶⁷ Further, some articles expressed fear associated with the development of a “trend of equipping cell phones with digital and video cameras,”⁶⁸ which are then further linked to digital communications (Dombrowski, Gischler, and Durst 2007).

Not one of these articles discussed the positive impact the Internet may have towards the psychological development of minors in our contemporary society. Understandably it would seem standard to inform the public of any security risks to minors, but the way in which Internet technology is framed in these news stories maintains public fear of new technological advances that are continuously incorporated into the social practices of a hi-tech generation. Media framing about the Internet more broadly in Canadian print media reiterates and perpetuates a collective fear amongst parents that the Internet lacks protection, has an intrusive component, and can be easily accessed by minors which create the opportunity for victimization.

4.7 Portrayal of Luring Legislation and its Enforcement

An overwhelming majority of articles made mention of potential charges faced by an accused person or discussed the offences for which an offender was found guilty. Thirty-nine percent or 101 of the 260 articles provided further more general discussion on Internet luring laws and the enforcement of these laws within Canada. Two central themes were identified that contributed to the portrayal of Internet luring laws and its enforcement. One theme focused on a positive tenor, which portrayed the justice system and its enforcement of laws as effective in combating this social phenomenon, and the

⁶⁷ N.A. “Block access to chat rooms in Libraries.” Montreal Gazette, January 9, 2003: pA.16.

⁶⁸ Hanes, A. “Predators hide behind technology: police race to keep up.” Montreal Gazette, March 19, 2006: pA.1.

alternative theme was of a negative tenor, which discussed the insufficient punishment offenders received and lack of clarity of Internet luring laws.

Of the study's 260 articles, 58 portrayed Internet child luring laws as effectively protecting minors, while being enforced on different levels of the Canadian justice system. While the RCMP were "patrolling cyberspace, conspicuously flashing their famous colours in chat rooms to let pedophiles know they're being watched,"⁶⁹ other regional police departments use detectives to "pose as young children or teenaged kids"⁷⁰ when conducting police sting operations to capture perpetrators online lurking for victims. Additional support is offered when "law enforcement from different countries work together"⁷¹ in cracking international cases involving cross-border crimes. The *National Post* published an article stating "...the Supreme Court of Canada moved yesterday to 'close the cyberspace door' on Internet predators in a unanimous ruling that is expected to make it easier to enforce Canada's criminal ban against luring children online;"⁷² The *Toronto Star* said "in the first test of a 2001 Criminal Code provision...the high court said the 'preparatory' steps taken to 'groom' children under 14 are a criminal offence, even before an actual sexual crime is committed or even attempted."⁷³

In one study, it was found that newspaper reading was positively associated with public confidence in the criminal court system as well as in the public school system (Moy, Pfau, and Kahlor 1999). Therefore, publishing the attentiveness of the Canadian government to online luring could positively correlate to public confidence in its policing

⁶⁹ Boswell, R. "RCMP to enter chat rooms to deter pedophiles," pA.20.

⁷⁰ Quinn, J. "Toronto man accused of luring on Net." *Toronto Star*, November 16, 2002: pB.02.

⁷¹ Slade, D. "Live Internet porn charges a first, Prosecutor says." *National Post*, June 8, 2005: pA.7.

⁷² N.A. "Supreme Court ruling likely to 'close the cyberspace door' on web predators." *National Post*, December 4, 2009: pA.8.

⁷³ MacCharles, T. "Online 'grooming' of kids ruled a crime," p.A.17.

of Internet luring. However not all Canadian print media developed a supportive discussion on Internet child luring and governmental agencies.

Some reporting on governmental competence took a negative position. While the *National Post* contends that “no matter how sophisticated cyberspace crimes are becoming, people are being caught more and more often,”⁷⁴ the *Vancouver Sun* provided opposing information from Stats Canada’s first statistical portrait of Internet child luring asserting that, “the first analysis of the seven-year-old criminal code offence concluded that the police track record in solving the borderless crime is worsening as technology advances,”⁷⁵ thus painting a very different portrait for Canadians.

Forty-three articles portrayed Internet luring and its enforcement in the justice system as inadequate. Insufficient sentencing and murky understanding of Internet luring laws were the key frames in these articles. For example, the *Vancouver Sun* suggested that “Canada’s legal and law enforcement systems have been slow to respond to the dangers.”⁷⁶ This could be due to the “horrific holes in our justice system”⁷⁷ which have sometimes led to the acquittal of Internet luring offenders. In one particular case, the previous Toronto police chief, Julian Fantino, responded to the weak sentencing of an offender by “summing up what most Canadians must surely feel...that the system has failed this young girl...the system has failed all of us.”⁷⁸ By publishing a profound statement vocalized by the Chief of Police, the article makes its readers question the capacity of the Canadian justice system to protect Canadian youth.

⁷⁴ Slade D. “Live Internet porn charges a first, Prosecutor says,” pA.7.

⁷⁵ N.A. “Internet Pedophiles largely unpunished, statscan says.” *Vancouver Sun*. March 13, 2009: pB.8.

⁷⁶ Mulgrew, L. “Children’s biggest threat is the Internet,” pA.4.

⁷⁷ Bramham, D. “Trust the police, we teach our children.” *Vancouver Sun*, June 16, 2007: p40.

⁷⁸ N.A. “Ottawa’s incompetence at deporting criminals puts lives at risk.” *Vancouver Sun*, December 1, 2005: pA.20.

In general, the articles support stiffer sentences for child luring and are critical of both weaker sentences and early parole. The *Montreal Gazette* discussed a case where “the court tried to set a precedent by stating that this was a serious crime [Internet luring]. The sentence was meant to deter others. The parole board’s decision negates that.”⁷⁹ The parole board decided to grant full early parole to a man serving a seven-year custody term for tricking two girls into performing sex acts for him over the Internet. Several articles noted that “luring law should be revamped, but it’s unlikely to happen anytime soon,”⁸⁰ leaving its reader pessimistic and doubtful needed reform will become a reality.

The dichotomous relationship between the opposing themes encourage uncertainty, either undermining confidence in the justice system or instilling insecurity in its ability to enforce Internet luring law. Most of the articles did not provide any further information beyond the offender’s name, charges received and location of the offence; however, the articles that did provide further information about luring legislation and its enforcement offered little surety for Canadian readers, as many positive assertions were counteracted by negative ones.

4.8 Portrayal of the Offender

Of the study’s 260 articles, 152 (58%) provided information about the offender and details regarding the Internet luring offence committed. The majority of articles discussing the offender were located in the *Montreal Gazette* with a total of 45 (30%) articles, and the *Vancouver Sun* provided the least amount of articles with a total of 32 (20%). The *Toronto Star* published 42(28%) articles and the *National Post* published 33 (22%). Of the 152 articles, 114 directed attention to four distinct themes.

⁷⁹ Cherry, P. “Man who used Net to lure girls gets parole.” *Montreal Gazette*, July 28, 2009: pA. 6.

⁸⁰ Purdy, C. “Internet sex chat with girl ‘not luring’: Edmonton man acquitted.” *National Post*, April 1, 2006: pA.2.

Accused persons were portrayed as predominantly male and between the ages of 30 and 36 years of age. The findings in this study are comparable to contemporary research in regards to age and sex of the offender, as it was reported in the N-JOV figures that the average age of male offenders is 26 to 39 years of age (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004; Mitchell, Wolak and Finkelhor 2005). None of the articles mention the race of the offender. Offender occupation was mentioned in 68 (26%) of the 260 articles in the study. When the articles did list occupations, it was clear that offenders populated an abundance of diverse occupations and some were highly educated. These occupations included: graphic designer, business man, police officer, computer technician, librarian, pastor, and professional athlete. However, with minimal discussion on the background or history of the offender that went beyond the stated occupational designation, Debra Black's article headlined as "Predator(s) could be anyone"⁸¹ and asserting in the body that offenders "come in all shapes and sizes,"⁸² cultivates an exaggerated fear that the "monster next door" remains unidentified and hidden among the general population. As normative ideologies suggest that "good" citizens are obedient and respectful of others and societal laws, media that constructs sexual offenders as mysterious malevolent beings undermines the assumption of morality and integrity integrated into the fabric of organized society. Therefore, headlines of this sort foster uncertainty as to who can be trusted around children and adolescents. Regardless of one's social status or employment background, the perpetrator is framed in media as completely unidentifiable.

Four main themes developed in the portrayal of the offender while analyzing the text of the news articles. First, offenders were often portrayed as calculated fiends

⁸¹ Black, D. "Predator could be anyone." Toronto Star, March 11, 2003: pE.01.

⁸² *Ibid.*

prowling websites in search of victims. Second, Offenders were portrayed as being deceitful when revealing their age to the victims. Third, offenders were constructed as persistent and persuasive when a connection was made with a minor online, and lastly, offenders are portrayed as becoming aggressive in their behaviour if rejected by the minor. All of these characteristics contribute to a societal panic that children are constantly in harm's way, when roaming the Internet.

Within the studied timeframe (96 months), 24 of the 114 articles talked about how offenders roamed cyberspace lurking for young victims to fulfill their deviant fantasies. Recent literature has shown that over 80% of sex offenders in Malesky and Alvin's (2007) study frequented chat rooms trolling for child victims. The president of the Winnipeg-based Beyond Borders organization noted that "surveys show that 1 in 5 children who use computer chat rooms have been approached over the Internet by pedophiles"⁸³ as "the Internet is the new hot spot for pedophiles to chat with and recruit kids."⁸⁴ The statistic provided by Beyond Borders is contrary to contemporary research, however, which shows that a high proportion of the sexual solicitation reported by minors in surveys actually occurs between peers (Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008).

According to 39 articles (16%), offenders masked their identity by "lying about their ages while visiting online chat rooms."⁸⁵ This was used as a technique to lure the child into initial conversation. In counterpoint to this popular perception, contemporary research shows that offenders do not generally use deceit when disclosing their age while

⁸³ Teel, G. "Microsoft to end free chat room service in 28 countries," pA.6.

⁸⁴ Hall, N. "Internet has a dark side," pB.7.

⁸⁵ N.A. "Accused sex offender gets new bail hearing." Vancouver Sun, June 18, 2004: pB.3. See also: N.A. "Man accused of telling Internet teen sex partner he was 19 –not in his 30s." Vancouver Sun. August 14, 2004: pB.3. See also: N.A. "Sexual assault hearing rescheduled." Vancouver Sun, June 8, 2004: pB.3.

conversing with a minor on the Internet (Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008; Wolak et al. 2008).

When details of an offender's behaviour are noted, they often stress the most deviant cases. The *Toronto Star* reported one offender who had "more than 2,000 contacts he had talked to online.....some of the children he contacted may recognize his photo because he often used a webcam."⁸⁶ The *National Post* talked about a RCMP officer who "is being investigated on child-exploitation charges after allegations he used a teen-dating Web site to prey on victims."⁸⁷ The *Montreal Gazette* mentioned an offender who was a "CEGEP student who lured girls he met in online chat rooms to his home and surreptitiously filmed himself having sex with them."⁸⁸ The same student's computer "contained records of more than 600 online chats he had with girls as young as 11....while passing himself off as a 17-year-old,"⁸⁹ even though his real age was 22-years-old. One article mentioned a father initiating chat through a social networking site, requesting sexual relations with his own biological daughter. The *Toronto Star* reported that an estranged father knowingly "propositioned his own 13 year old daughter on the Internet....while on Facebook social networking site using the name "Bad Daddy" to locate the girl and proposed meeting the girl for sex."⁹⁰

Twenty-five articles framed the offender as being persistent and persuasive in his attempt to "entice"⁹¹ minors, even targeting "hundreds and hundreds of girls in a single

⁸⁶ N.A. "GTA." *Toronto Star*, August 3, 2006: pA. 23.

⁸⁷ Colebourn, J. "RCMP junior officer in B.C investigated for child-exploitation claims." *National Post*. October 31, 2005: pA.7.

⁸⁸ N.A. "In focus." *Montreal Gazette*, January 13, 2005: pA.2.

⁸⁹ Hanes. A. "Girls filmed for sex Web sites". *Montreal Gazette*, January 13, 2005: pA.7.

⁹⁰ N.A. "Facebook predator 'Bad Daddy' lured his own daughter." *Toronto Star*, October 13, 2009: pA.2.

⁹¹ N.A. "Man lured girl." *Montreal Gazette*, Sept 14, 2002: pA.18.

year.”⁹² Internet luring offenders were portrayed as going to great lengths to achieve their end goal, to sexually abuse a minor. The *Toronto Star* noted that one offender had departed his own country (Canada) to “drive a rental car to Virginia...to lure the child from home.”⁹³ The *Montreal Gazette* wrote of a man who flew from Belgium “to Montreal in hopes of building a life with”⁹⁴ a 13-year-old girl. In another story, a female offender was portrayed as “very persistent to meet...even though she knew how old he was by the time the relationship started.”⁹⁵ A 42-year-old female even flew from Texas to meet her online crush, a 16-year-old boy from Barrie, Ontario. She was further questioned by authorities once she arrived back in Texas although no charges were laid in Ontario.

For news articles, the cases that are reported are portrayed as just the tip of the iceberg, as they are seen as among “the growing number of men in foreign countries who have used the Internet to lure Canadian children for sex.”⁹⁶ It is also important to note that Canadian men target minors in other nations as well.⁹⁷ In one case discussed by Davidson (2004), a police investigation on child sexual exploitation found a French Canadian to be organising the prostitution of minors from his hotel room in Boca Chica, Dominican Republic, to other Canadian and International travellers, through posting on message boards. The N-JOV also reported that 40% of offenders or victims cross state or international boundaries to attend first meetings (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004).

⁹² Kleiss, K. “Online predator faked identity to lure hundreds.” *Montreal Gazette*, August 22, 2007: pA.13.

⁹³ Huffman, T. “Man faces charge of luring.” *Toronto Star*, April 16, 2005: pB.03.

⁹⁴ Montgomery, S. “Belgian man not a sex maniac.” *Montreal Gazette*, July 4, 2008: pA.6. See also: Montgomery, S. “Belgian south to take 13 year old girl to Ontario.” *Montreal Gazette*, Jun 21, 2008: pA.5.

⁹⁵ Brean, J. “Under an Online Spell?” *National Post*, January 7, 2010: pA.3.

⁹⁶ Blackwell, T. “Pedophiles targeting Canadian kids.” *National Post*, May 17, 2004: pA.4.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Other offenders were persistent in their grooming tactics to befriend a particular young victim. The *National Post* suggested that “grooming for a pedophile is the equivalent of courting a normative relationship.”⁹⁸ Several stories were published that discussed resilient offenders and their grooming methods. One man developed relationships with boys by taking them for “meals and ice cream at fast-food restaurants” and was said to have “given the boys gifts, including video games.”⁹⁹ In a Peel Regional Police sting, an offender sent repeated emails requesting a meeting with the fictitious victim, even “allegedly agreeing to pay for sex with the girl.”¹⁰⁰ The *Montreal Gazette* warned that it is not uncommon for “online communication to last sometimes months”¹⁰¹ between offender and victim, even sending upwards of “3,000 emails.”¹⁰² These observations are supported in the academic literature that shows that communication between offender and luring victim can occur over a period of months and that perpetrators are willing to wait patiently and evolve these relationships over time (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004; Wolak et al. 2008; Davidson 2008). It is sometimes the offender’s determination that entices victims to meet where they are “convinced to have sex.”¹⁰³ The participation of minors, although generally considered voluntary, is voluntary in varying degrees. Some victims are pressured to engage in sex, and some are intimidated (Darroch, Landry and Oslak 1999).

⁹⁸ Hanes, A. “Ruling may leave children at risk.” *National Post*, April 5, 2006: pA.12.

⁹⁹ Kohler, N. “Teacher accused of molesting young boys.” *National Post*, October 19, 2005: pA.11.

¹⁰⁰ N.A. “Man charged with Internet luring after officer poses as 13 year old girl.” *National Post*, September 16, 2009: pA.8.

¹⁰¹ Kohler, N. “Evangelical pastor charged with trying to meet girl after sexual online chat.” *Vancouver Sun*, August 11, 2005: pA.4. See also: Montgomery, S. “Belgian sought to take 13 year old girl to Ontario.” *Montreal Gazette*, June 21, 2008: pA. 5.

¹⁰² Montgomery, S. “Belgian sought to take 13 year old girl to Ontario.” *Montreal Gazette*, June 21, 2008: pA. 5.

¹⁰³ N.A. “Man lured girl.” *Montreal Gazette*, September 14, 2002: pA.18.

Twenty-six articles analyzed in this study directly discussed offenders as being aggressive and arrogant in their behaviour towards the victims. One offender's perception was so skewed by arrogance that he "couldn't imagine his victims weren't in love with him, too."¹⁰⁴ It is this very narcissism that prevents some offenders "from understanding what [they] had done"¹⁰⁵ and "showed no emotion"¹⁰⁶ when sentenced. The *Montreal Gazette* pointed out that a Judge noticed the offender "saw nothing wrong with his action which was an 'aberration'"¹⁰⁷ in his eyes. The judge responded to this particular case, in which the offender was charged with possession of child pornography and Internet luring of young girls, by concluding that he "couldn't imagine a human being collecting pictures of babies being assaulted without feeling extreme disgust."¹⁰⁸

All four Canadian newspapers published stories asserting that offenders have induced fear in the victims by threatening reprisal if a specific request was not fulfilled. The *National Post* reported a story where one girl was "forced into a bedroom where they [two men] forcibly stripped and raped her"¹⁰⁹ when she refused to perform sexual acts with them. The *Montreal Gazette* reported on an 11-year-old Toronto girl who was lured by a 35-year-old man who "held her captive for 15 hours.... try[ing] to sexually assault her,"¹¹⁰ while plying her with alcohol to assist in lowering her inhibitions to perform sexual acts.¹¹¹ The *Toronto Star* covered a story where a "man allegedly lured at least

¹⁰⁴ Solyom, C. "Man who sexually assaulted girls full of himself." Vancouver Sun, December 13, 2003: pA. 8.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Ravensbergen, J. "Belgian will likely serve 15 months." Montreal Gazette, July 25, 2008: pA.6.

¹⁰⁷ Montgomery, S. "Child porn trader's lack of remorse an aberration." Montreal Gazette, June 30, 2005: pA.13.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Loyie, F. "Girl, 16, raped after Internet meetings, police say." National Post, May 23, 2002: pA.8.

¹¹⁰ N.A. "Ontario: Net stalker guilty." Montreal Gazette, November 25, 2004: pA.12.

¹¹¹ Kari, S. "11-year-old's sex attacker could go free for time served." Vancouver Sun, November 26, 2004: pA.12. See also: Kari, S. "Police criticize sex predator's 21-months jail sentence." Vancouver Sun,

100 girls in Canada and England, ranging in age from 9 to 15, to expose themselves to him by webcam, then captured the images and threatened to email them to friends and parents if the girls did not perform further sex acts.”¹¹² This occurred after the man had already “chatted [with] teens on the Internet, hacked into their email accounts, got their buddy lists, and contacted those people posing as their friends,”¹¹³ which later turned out to be his victims. The *Vancouver Sun* reported on a story where a South Asian man “accosted two teen girls....with his face covered, he brandished a knife while demanding money or sex”¹¹⁴ after he had lured them into an offline meeting via online communications.

By framing offenders as calculating fiends prowling the Internet, Canadian news articles encourage the idea that children will be inevitable targets if browsing chat rooms and social networking sites. This is not to say these fears are entirely unfounded and unwarranted. However, employing rhetoric that focuses on such behaviour intensifies fear by parents and legal guardians for their children’s on-line safety.

4.9 Portrayal of the Victim

Internet child luring victims were characterized in news articles as predominantly female and between the ages of 12 and 14 years of age. The N-JOV figures have demonstrated comparable demographic variables with age and sex, indicating that victims are generally females and between the ages of 13 and 15 (Wolak, Finkelhor, and Mitchell 2004). Of the 260 articles, 76 (29%) provided information about the minor and

November 25, 2004: pF.11. See also: N.A. “All non-Canadian violent offenders should be booted out.” *Vancouver Sun*, December 15, 2005: pA. 18.

¹¹² Aly, H. “Dozens of girls lured into sex on webcam,” p90.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Sinoski, K. “RCMP hunt Surry Internet lurer.” *Vancouver Sun*, April 30, 2008: pB.2.

their victimization. Willingness to engage in their victimization and being portrayed as defiant juveniles are principal themes that emerged in the analysis of the articles.

The willingness of victims to partake in adult-minor relations was discussed in all four Canadian newspapers. All four papers discussed how a “Belgian man and a smitten 13-year-old girl planned to settle in an Amish community in Ontario where they believed no one would question their 20-year age difference...the teen later forged a note from her mother saying she had a medical appointment and wouldn’t be returning to class.”¹¹⁵ The *National Post* asserts that another victim “agreed to meet the men at a mall where they showed up and drove the teenager to the house”¹¹⁶ where the 16-year-old girl was raped. These themes are corroborated in the research, where in a national US study half of the victims described themselves as being in love with or feeling close bonds with offenders (Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor 2008).

Although victims were predominantly girls, male victims have also shown eagerness to meet older adults. A 16-year-old boy “initiated online contact [with his teacher] because he was depressed over his breaking up with his girlfriend.”¹¹⁷ Another 12-year-old boy in Vancouver “stole \$200 cash from his brother and sisters before leaving, and broke into the family’s locked garden shed to get his red Schwinn mountain

¹¹⁵ Banerjee, S. “Man, 32, pleads guilty to luring 13-year-old.” *Toronto Star*, June 21, 2008: pA22. See also: Ravensbergen, J. “Quebec Court jails Internet predator.” *National Post*, July 25, 2008: pA.6. See also: N.A. “Belgian man pleads guilty to luring girl.” *National Post*, June 21, 2008: pA.11. See also: N.A. “Belgian’s bail hearing to be set tomorrow.” *Montreal Gazette*, June 19, 2008: pA.9. See also: Montgomery, S. “Belgian arraigned on sex-crime charges.” *Montreal Gazette*, June 17, 2008: pA.6.

¹¹⁶ Loyie, F. “Girl, 16, raped after Internet meeting, police say.” *National Post*, May 23, 2002: pA.8.

¹¹⁷ Mitchell, B. “Teacher avoids jail Web Cat.” *Toronto Star*, Jan 16, 2009: pA.3. See also: Mitchell, B. “Teen denies teacher sex charges.” *Toronto Star*, November 16, 2007: pA.7. See also: Mitchell, B. “Teacher pleads guilty to luring teenager online.” *Toronto Star*, November 25, 2008: p.A.4.

bike”¹¹⁸ where he was believed to be heading “towards the U.S to meet someone he contacted through the Internet.”¹¹⁹

This keenness to initiate contact or agree to meet off-line demonstrates the trust minor’s exhibit in their cyber communications. However, fears about the degree to which posting information online puts a youth at risk of being lured are exaggerated. The *Vancouver Sun* contends that “millions of teenagers are flocking to these online portals and posting their personal videos, photos, and information for all to see.”¹²⁰ However, the scholarly literature does not propose that posting personal information on the Internet is risky in itself (Wolak et al. 2008). Instead, it is the communication between adult offender and victim that happens beyond the posting of information that is truly risky. Media that is focusing its attention on the willingness of minors to post personal information on the Internet exacerbates parental anxiety regarding a minor exploring their curiosities about friendship building, identity construction, and sexuality using Internet technology (Kierkegaard 2008). Parents and legal guardians have been misled with inaccurate facts in print media which may lead to misinformed methods of opportunity-reducing tactics, which is not linked to inflated anxiety.

Some articles report on cases where children were determined to meet their online “friend” not knowing his history or background, even when advised otherwise.¹²¹ Susan Abram’s article avows that “there are a lot of children and teens who think the grass is greener on the other side.”¹²² In addition, the *Toronto Star* reported a story where a 16-year-old boy went against his parents’ prohibition and “ran away while the rest of the

¹¹⁸ Hansen, D. “Internet predator may have lured boy,” pB.1.

¹¹⁹ Fowlie, J. “Internet pal lures boy, 12, to eastern U.S.” *Vancouver Sun*, January 26, 2006: pB.2.

¹²⁰ Radia, A. “Canadian kids the most vulnerable to Internet luring,” pA.11.

¹²¹ Blackwell, T. “Pedophiles targeting Canadian kids,” pA.4.

¹²² Abram, S. “Finger points to blog as girls, 13, vanish.” *National Post*, February 27, 2006: pA.10.

house slept, leaving behind an earnest note declaring his heartfelt commitment to the much older woman,”¹²³ as he had developed “an intense online relationship two years ago through the online game World of Warcraft.”¹²⁴ This same boy later professed that “[he] didn’t regret what [he] did or what she did....she thought I was 20 and I was very convincing.”¹²⁵ The *Montreal Gazette* described how a 12-year-old girl ignored the advice given by police and “called him [offender] and warned him that the police were looking for him,”¹²⁶ and thus hindered the investigation. Twelve articles also described victims as misrepresenting themselves as older to the offender.¹²⁷ Five articles discussed victim-offender relations that included consensual sex.¹²⁸ These articles acknowledge that some victims are interested in the possibility of meeting persons older than themselves for sexual relations, even if it means being deceptive about their age. Reports on rebellious behaviour like this may diminish parents’ confidence in their capacity to protect their own children from being lured by an adult.

Only five articles discussed the harm caused to Internet child luring victims.

Although it was reported that “it is hard to determine what kind of impact this will have in the future,”¹²⁹ one article stated that the Harper government proposed a bill in

¹²³ Kennedy, B. “Case dropped against mom accused of luring boy.” *Toronto Star*, July 1, 2010: pGT.1. See also: Breaun, J. “Under an Online Spell.” *National Post*, January 7, 2010: pA.3.

¹²⁴ Chai, C. “Women charged in Texas for tryst with Barrie boy.” *Toronto Star*, January 6, 2010: pA.2.

¹²⁵ Kennedy, B. “Case dropped against mom accused of luring boy,” pGT.1.

¹²⁶ Edson, K. “Off-island family fights to protect daughter from cyber predator.” *Montreal Gazette*, Nov 18, 2010: pD.1.

¹²⁷ Levy, H. “Internet luring sentence sparks outrage”, pB05. See also: Kari, S. “Man who lured girl, 11 gets no extra jail time.” *National Post*, November 25, 2004: pA8. See also: Small, P. “Man found guilty of Internet luring.” *Toronto Star*, October 11, 2004: pB.01.

¹²⁸ Rupert J. “Texas man lured Ottawa teen.” *National Post*, March 8, 2005: pA.9. See also: Solyom, C. “Man who sexually assaulted girls full of himself, Judge says.” *Vancouver Sun*, December 13, 2003: pA.8. See also: Wilson, V. “Mountie acquitted of using Web to lure teen.” *Vancouver Sun*, June 9, 2007: pB.10. See also: N.A. “Teen testifies she ‘snapped’ one day, told police the next.” *Vancouver Sun*, June 7, 2007: pB.5.

¹²⁹ Kari, S. “Man who lured girl, 11 gets no extra jail time,” pA8. See also: Kari, S. “Police criticized sex predator’s 21-month jail sentence.” *Vancouver Sun*, November 25, 2004: pF.11.

November 2010 that recognizes “the damage that sex abuse has on young people,”¹³⁰ and gives an offender automatic jail time. With the majority of articles framing victims as contributors to their own demise (Greenfield 2004), there is a gap between the image of victims and statements that are certain that luring is a form of sexual abuse. Interestingly, societal discourse on child-adult relationships has created an ideology that forbids this type of relationship; however, no article discussed the various reasons why these relationships are inappropriate for adolescents. It has become a cultural assumption through legislation and social consensus that these relationships are presumptively exploitative and so restrictions on a youth’s autonomy in choosing with whom to have a sexual relationship are justified. No articles allowed that a youth might seek out relationships with adults out of personal desire that is not the result of emotional manipulation.

¹³⁰ Tibbetts, J. “Bill proposed automatic jail time for sex crimes against children.” Vancouver Sun, November 5, 2010: pB.4.

Conclusion

After completing a content analysis, this project highlights the possible influences Canadian print media might have on the perceptions of parents and legal guardians regarding the dangers associated with Internet use by minors. The two main objectives the study focused upon were: (1) to analyze various ways in which four Canadian newspapers framed Internet child luring and Internet technology; and (2) to explore the possible repercussions of these narratives on parental guidance with their children. The 260 articles from the *Vancouver Sun*, *Toronto Star*, *Montreal Gazette*, and the *National Post* collectively demonstrate selectivity of news reporting in constructing Internet child luring in Canada. Media's selectivity was apparent as three noticeable components were missing in the construction of Internet child luring reports. First, news articles never attempted to explain why Internet child luring is occurring; secondly, there was no mention as to why adult-child relationships were considered inappropriate and forbidden; and thirdly, the possible long-term effects of child sexual abuse upon Internet child victims were never mentioned in any of the four Canadian newspapers. Media's failure to reveal these harmful effects disregards the enduring destruction of online sexual abuse on a particular victim. This also demonstrates that media is solely focused on real-time newsworthy issues rather than stories that discuss various facets of child sexual abuse.

Throughout the 96-month period analyzed in this study, the four newspapers published on average approximately 3 articles per month on Internet child luring and the majority of articles were printed within the first section of each paper. Internet child luring was constructed as a serious social phenomenon and threat to public safety which requires parents and legal guardians to monitor their children's Internet use. Situational crime prevention via parental monitoring and educating minors were the leading

solutions proposed in the articles to limit the opportunity for perpetrators to connect online with particular children. Legislative reform was the second leading solution provided to assist in diminishing online victimization of minors.

As media outlets generally employ multiple contributors (Jewkes 2004), the four newspapers created a collage of journalistic interpretations and opinions about Internet child luring. With each journalist incorporating their own knowledge about what they perceive luring to be and its tie to Internet technology, a lack of consistency is created in newspapers' presentation of the crime to the curious and uniformed public. The quantitative and qualitative analysis highlights several themes which developed in each section of the analysis.

When Internet use was discussed in the articles, three particular themes developed in regards to user risk. All four Canadian newspapers created a rhetoric that focused on trolling perpetrators who lure unsuspecting victims in chat rooms, the anonymity of cyberspace, and that children have been easily duped into sexual behaviours by manipulative perpetrators. Internet technology was depicted as having minimal security for users, being intrusive into private households, and easily accessible. These characteristics are all portrayed as common fears associated with this technology. Minors were constructed as being in harm's way when using the Internet due to the various dangers listed above. As one paper reported, "...with the rapid expansion of Internet access across Canada, sexual predators are increasingly using this technology as a platform to reach and sexually exploit young, vulnerable children."¹³¹

When luring legislation and its enforcement by the justice system was discussed, the articles developed opposing tenors on this topic. The positive tenor portrayed the

¹³¹ O'Neil, P. "Internet child-luring law passes major hurdle." Vancouver Sun, February 6, 2007: pA.6.

justice system and its enforcement of laws as effective in regulating Internet luring in Canada. The negative tenor discussed the insufficient punishment offenders received and the lack of clarity Internet luring laws have with the public. Having journalists frame Internet luring law in opposing tenors creates a lack of cohesiveness in public support and opinion.

Several behavioural attributes were established in the articles about offenders. Offenders were presented as being calculating fiends who prowl on websites targeting minors. Offenders were described as persistent and persuasive when communicating with a minor; even sometimes becoming aggressive if rejected by a minor. These specific attributes create an image of a sexual delinquent who is immoral and disregards the law.

The media portrayals of victims of online luring were constructed in two distinct manners. Victims were noted for their willingness to engage in particular adult-youth relationships. Victims were also portrayed as defiant juveniles who challenged parental and police authority by continuing online relationships with adult perpetrators during police investigations. This rebelliousness provokes further anxiety for parents and legal guardians in crime prevention methods as safety strategies will require additional support beyond simple monitoring and education on cyber-risks. Prevention will then require an additional element of protection; that is, protection of the minor from online perpetrators as well as protection from the minor's own self-harming online behaviour.

Overall, Canadian newspapers presented several dangers of child luring and the Internet. The statistical prevalence of child luring were sometimes exaggerated when compared to contemporary research. The embellished statistics do not represent the

current reality of Internet child luring as per research studies. However, some of the themes that developed in the analysis from the articles did complement existing research on Internet technology. The news articles on luring crime stories employed anxiety-provoking rhetoric that potentially hinders parental confidence in their ability to protect their children. Some of the study's findings could potentially reflect ideological assumptions that misrepresent the true reality of Internet child luring. The framing effects of media on Internet child luring therefore perpetuate the ideological assumption in some readers who have already cast judgment on aspects of this crime and the criminal justice system at hand. Canadian print media has been successful in constructing Internet technology and its use by minors as harmful, intrusive and unavoidable.

This study postulates that the call for parents and legal guardians to take a primary role in protecting their children from online victimization. However, the study also found that the articles published during the 96 month period had the potential to generate stress and fear in parental guidance due to the narratives created by multiple journalists. Also, parental anxiety was amplified due to the limited resources suggested in the articles on crime prevention, therefore limiting situational crime prevention of their children. As crime prevention theory contends that situational prevention is taken from a point of view of a potential offender, and its success rate requires opportunity-reducing techniques (Clarke 1983; Eck 2003; Sutton, Cherney, and White 2008), opportunity to offend could increase due to the lack of technological education and experience provided to parents and legal guardians.

Research Limitations

For this research project, time constraints justified the use of the Canadian Newsstand's database as a means of data collection and proved to be more efficient than searching microfilm archives. However, using computerized databases poses its own potential problems. Relevant text, not containing the selected keywords, may have been overlooked despite legislative and language considerations. Another issue with *Canadian Newsstand's* data is the lack of images, original textual size, and physical layout of articles as published in the newspaper. These aspects all hindered the ability to fully interpret the articles. Due to the minimal text provided in some articles, analytical depth was restricted and therefore interpretation was limited.

As new technology develops by which crime stories can reach a large audience, more depth into the understanding on the construction of Internet child luring could occur if other mediums were included in further analysis. However, Canadian newspapers were chosen due to time and accessibility for the purposes of this project. As Canada contains two national languages, it would be of interest to study French print media for further interpretations on how this crime is constructed in French.

Future Research

Although a substantial amount of scholarships on child sexual abuse is available, very little published research material actually exists on the luring of children over the Internet. Specifically, Canada would gain from further examination on this topic to assist in developing more effective legislation and policies to assist in diminishing the crime's occurrence. Another policy implication could be the development of more accessible programs that assist in educating parents and minors of the dangers of cyberspace and the

evolving nature of Internet technology. This project offers an opportunity to evaluate the information parents and legal guardians receive via news media about online perpetrators and children's online activities. Future research complementing this project could introduce an additional medium such as televised news reports and online sources, to evaluate whether parental fears are exacerbated the same way in other media as well.

Additionally, future analyses that examine how newspaper reporting acts to control youth rather than acknowledging the potential normality/healthy uses of the Internet for peer interaction (even if it is sexual) as opposed to a focus on child/adult interaction that is unhealthy and illegal could be of importance. Thus, newspaper reporting could reflect cultural dispositions towards youth freedom of expression through such framing.

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